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THE
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CONTAINING SEVEN ELABORATE SKELETON SERMONS,

OR,

HOMILETIC, DOGMATICAL, LITURGICAL, SYMBOLICAL, AND MORAL SKETCHES,

FOR EVERY SUNDAY OF THE YEAR.

ALSO ELABORATE SKELETON SERMONS

FOR THE CHIEF FESTIVALS AND OTHER OCCASIONS.

BY THE REV. JOHN EVANGELIST ZOLLNER.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN, WITH PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR, AND ADAPTED BY

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WITH PREFACE BY THE REV. A. A. LAMBING.

TWELFTH REVISED EDITION.

VOL. II.

FROM THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY TO EASTER SUNDAY.

Frederick Pustet & Co.,

Printers to the Holy Apostolic See and the Sacred Congregation of Rites

RATISBON ROME NEW YORK CINCINNATI

1911

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SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

Epistle. *I. Thess.* 2-10. Brethren: We give thanks to God always for you all; making a remembrance of you in our prayers without ceasing, being mindful of the work of your faith, and labor, and charity, and of the enduring of the hope of our Lord Jesus Christ before God and our Father; knowing, brethren, beloved of God, your election; for our gospel hath not been to you in word only, but in power also, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much fulness, as you know what manner of men we have been among you for your sakes. And you became followers of us, and of the Lord: receiving the word in much tribulation, with joy of the Holy Ghost: so that you were made a pattern to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you was spread abroad the word of the Lord; not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place, your faith which is towards God is gone forth, so that we need not to speak anything. For they themselves relate of us, what manner of entering in we had unto you; and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God. And to wait for his Son from heaven (whom he raised from the dead), Jesus, who hath delivered us from the wrath to come.

1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

WHAT THE APOSTLE PARTICULARLY PRAISES IN THE THESSALONIANS.

The lesson for this day, the sixth Sunday after Epiphany, is taken from the first Epistle of St. Paul to the Thessalonians. Thessalonica was not only the capital, but also one of the most renowned and opulent cities of Macedonia. Its inhabitants were composed of Greeks, Romans, Jews, and Pagans. St. Paul preached the gospel in this city with great success. But the unbelieving Jews, envying his success, raised such a commotion against him that he was obliged to quit the city. He then went to the very cradle of art and science and preached in the Areopagus of Athens. Hearing that his converts in Thessalonica had been undergoing a severe persecution ever since his departure,

and fearing that they would lose courage, he sent Timothy to strengthen and comfort them in their sufferings.

In the meantime St. Paul hurried on to Corinth, where Timothy was to meet him. After a few months Timothy arrived, bringing the joyful tidings that the Christians, in spite of the Jewish persecution, were in a flourishing condition, but that unfortunately they were not sufficiently instructed in some doctrines. Then it was that St. Paul wrote his first Epistle to them, in the nineteenth year after our Lord's Ascension. I should remark also that this is the first of his fourteen Epistles in the order of time. It will be, then, our pleasant task to-day to consider the portion of this inspired letter which the Church proposes to us on this occasion.

The Apostle assures the Thessalonians that he gives thanks to God always for them all, and prays for them especially *on account of the work of their faith, and labor, and charity, and of the enduring of the hope of our Lord Jesus Christ before God and our Father.* What he praises in them is:

1. *The work of their faith.* As we read in the Acts of the Apostles, a great multitude of the Pagans at Thessalonica had embraced Christianity. These converts were conspicuous for the strength and earnestness of their faith. The Apostle gladly recognizes their preeminence in this divine virtue, giving thanks to God for it. Had we no other instructions on the subject, the words of St. Paul in this day's epistle would abundantly suffice to convince us of the necessity of faith, its meritoriousness, and its exalted character. Faith, indeed, is the foundation of all Christian virtue. It is faith that leads us to the knowledge of God and of all supernatural truth, discloses to us our temporal and eternal destiny, furnishes us with courage and strength to overcome all obstacles to salvation and always to walk in the path of virtue. Faith is the first requisite for salvation, since "without faith it is impossible to please God."—*Heb.* 11: 6. We possess this faith from our infancy; we received it in baptism. Let us give thanks to God for this unmerited gift of faith, and let us take care not to lose it in these faithless times.

2. The Apostle praises the Thessalonians *on account of the work of their faith.* They manifested their faith by a pious, virtuous life. A living faith, not a dead one, saves us. "By works a man is justified, and not by faith only." *St. James* 2: 24. "As he who wishes to go to a certain place needs two things for the attainment of the object of his journey—namely, eyesight and feet—so he who wishes to go to heaven needs the eye of faith and the feet of good works."—*St. Gregory the Great.* A Christian who does not live according to his faith may expect a severer lot hereafter than the heathens, because he knows God and his

holy law better, and receives more graces for his salvation. "That servant who knew the will of his Lord, and hath not prepared, and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes."—*Luke* 12: 47. Do not believe only, but act up to your belief.

3. *The labors of love.*

(*a.*) The Apostle here speaks of the love of God and our neighbor. It is the greatest of all virtues, for it comprises all others and is the fulfilling of the law (*Rom.* 13: 10); it is love that gives to all other virtues and good works their true value and renders them meritorious before God (*I. Cor.* 13: 1, 3); it unites us with God (*I. John* 4: 16), and prepares for us unspeakable happiness. —*I. Cor.* 2: 9.

(*b.*) Charity has *its labors.* It does not consist in pious sentiments, but in a faithful performance of the will of God. What then is the will of God? That we mortify ourselves interiorly and exteriorly, that we be patient, meek and humble of heart, that we overcome all temptations, love even our enemies and those who injure and offend us, and do good to them that hate and persecute us. All this costs much labor and self-denial. It involves sacrifices. Charity therefore has its labors. The Thessalonians having assumed these labors of love willingly and cheerfully, the Apostle praises them. How do matters stand with us? Can we with truth say, "O God, I love thee above all things?"

4. *The enduring of the hope of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

(*a.*) Hope is also a very great and important virtue. Like faith, it not only shows us the felicity of heaven and the means of acquiring it, but it enables us to await that boon with patience and at the same time with the most firm and unshaken confidence. Hope detaches our heart from the fleeting goods and transitory pleasures of this world, and raises it to the contemplation of the eternal. It comforts and strengthens us in all the vicissitudes of life, and is a most powerful incentive to heroic undertakings and the performance of the noblest deeds. Such is Christian hope. "A Christian who trusts in God may be tempted, but he can not be overcome, for, wherever he is, he is not without God, nor without strength, illumination, consolation and divine assistance." —*St. Cyprian.*

(*b.*) The Thessalonians possessed the virtue of hope blended with perseverance in an admirable degree. In expectation of

that eternal felicity which Jesus Christ promised his faithful followers, they endured with patience and constancy all the sufferings and privations incident to a virtuous life. Like the Christians of Thessalonica, we too are suffering persecutions at present. The Catholic Church has numberless enemies to-day, who are laboring incessantly for her downfall. But let us never lose courage; let us persevere in Christian hope. She lived to see the end of a Julian the Apostate, of a Mazzini and a Palmerston; she chanted the requiem over the graves of a Napoleon and a Victor Emmanuel, and she will live to see the end of Bismarck and Gambetta.

5. The Apostle praises the Thessalonians on account of the signs of *election* which they manifested in their lives (4, 5). Among these signs, besides the three theological virtues, which they possessed in an eminent degree, were the miracles which God vouchsafed them; for instance, the gift of tongues, prophecy, the healing of the sick, especially *the extraordinary zeal with which they received the gospel and lived according to its ordinances.* From this he infers that they are in great favor with God, and will obtain eternal salvation. St. Paul, without a special revelation of God, could not with infallible certainty know the "election" of the Thessalonians to eternal salvation, but seeing that God enriched them with so many and so extraordinary graces, he had every reason to believe that they were really of the number of the elect. With regard to ourselves, we must, as this same Apostle elsewhere says (*Philip.* 2:12), work out our salvation with fear and trembling, and this, partly because of our weakness and inconstancy, and partly because of the many and great dangers to salvation by which we are surrounded so long as we live. This fear is most salutary; "for, as in a house in which there is an armed soldier no thief, robber, or enemy dares to enter, so, if we have the fear of God in our hearts, no enemy of our salvation will dare to penetrate thereto."—*St. John Chrys.* At the same time we must hope for salvation with joyful confidence, for, if we be really in earnest; if we detest and avoid all evil from the bottom of our hearts; if we watch and pray, remaining profoundly humble, God will certainly preserve us in his love and grace and grant us a holy and happy end. "If our heart do not reprehend us, we have confidence towards God; and whatsoever we shall ask we shall receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight."—*I. John* 3: 21, 22.

6. The Apostle also praises the Thessalonians *because they became followers of him and of Jesus Christ,* receiving the word in much tribulation, with the joy of the Holy Ghost. Our divine

Saviour and St. Paul suffered many tribulations and persecutions in the preaching of the gospel, but endured them all not only with patience, but with holy joy. Thus, St. Paul says of himself: "I am filled with comfort, I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation."—*II. Cor.* 7: 4. Now, because the Thessalonians suffered much for the gospel (*Acts* 17: 5, 9), and endured all with a holy joy, the Apostle calls them followers of him and of Jesus Christ and praises them. To suffer persecution for justice' sake with joy is a most sublime and therefore most praiseworthy virtue; it is possible only to those who by grace are raised above mere human nature, and who have made their body insensible to everything that could pain them.

Endeavor that you also may be praised for your joy in sufferings. If for the sake of virtue or faith you are rebuked, despised, mocked, or persecuted, do not lose courage, or become despondent; above all do not allow any bitterness or hatred of your enemies and oppressors to arise in your hearts; rejoice rather that Jesus Christ has deemed you worthy to suffer ignominy for the sake of his holy name. "Dearly beloved, think not strange the burning heat which is to try you, as if some new thing happened to you; but if you partake of the sufferings of Christ, rejoice, that when his glory shall be revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy."—*I. Pet.* 4: 12, 13.

7. Lastly, the Apostle praises the Thessalonians *on account of the excellent example which they gave to all the faithful.* "You were made a pattern to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia." The Thessalonians became a pattern to the other Christians by their conversion and Christian conduct. At the preaching of St. Paul they had renounced idolatry and embraced the Christian religion: they had endured with patience and constancy whatever trials and sufferings their conversion entailed upon them, and now having placed all their hope and confidence in Jesus Christ, and mindful of his coming to judge them, they were leading most holy lives. This example had the most wholesome influence upon all the Christian of Greece, for it strengthened them in their faith and increased their fervor. Even pagans resolved to imitate the Thessalonians and to become Christians.

If St. Paul could write us a letter from heaven would he say of us *that we were made a pattern for all Christians?* If all the Catholics upon earth were to regulate themselves by us, if they believed only as we believe, and lived as we live, would they be in the right way? Would they be convinced that they were pleasing to God and would save their souls? Perhaps they would take no exception to our faith, for at least the majority of us believe what the holy Catholic Church proposes to our belief, and we are willing to live and die in that faith. But just look at the lives

we lead! How many are there among us who instead of being an edification to our co-religionists are a scandal to them? When we call to mind the shameless discourses which many indulge in, their extravagant fondness for dress, their carelessness in fulfilling the duties of their religion and state of life, their dissipation and vices, must not all these things be described as scandals? Must not those who take them for a pattern be very far from that holiness and perfection which the Apostle praised in the Thessalonians?

PERORATION.

Take the Christians of Thessalonica for your pattern and imitate them. Practice the three theological virtues, and make your faith living, your charity active, and your hope firm and lasting. Keep with persevering fervor the commandments of God and the precepts of the Church, endure with patience the tribulations of your state of life and the afflictions incident to it, and provide "good things, not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of all men."—*Rom.* 12; 17. If you do this, you will merit such praise as the Thessalonians received, and you may hope with confidence that you will be associated with them in the number of the elect for ever in heaven. Amen.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

GOSPEL. *Matt.* 13: 31-35. At that time: Jesus spoke this parable to the multitudes: The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. Which it the least indeed of all seeds; but when it is grown up it is greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof.

Another parable he spoke to them. The kingdom of heaven is like to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened. All these things Jesus spoke in parables to the multitudes, and without parables he did not speak to them. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world."

2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

THE TWO PARABLES OF THE GOSPEL.

St. Matthew remarks at the end of the gospel for this day that Jesus spoke all things in parables to the multitudes, that the word might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying. *I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world.* Among the nations of the East, and especially among the Jews, parables and similitudes were very much in use. Our Lord adhered to this manner of speech, clothing his doctrines in most beautiful figures and similitudes, in order to give his hearers a clearer perception of the truths he taught, and to impress them the more deeply on their minds. The prophets had already foretold that the coming Messias would speak in parables to the people.—*Deut.* 18: 15; *Ps.* 77: 2. Now Jesus made frequent use of parables in his instructions, and we find in this circumstance, insignificant of itself, a proof that he was the Messias promised and sent by God.

Let us to-day turn our attention to the two parables of this day's gospel and see—

I. What they signify;
II. What they teach us.

Part I.

A. The parable of the mustard-seed.

1. *The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field.*

(*a.*) By the kingdom of heaven here spoken of is meant, not the abode of saints and angels in the kingdom of God in the next world, but the Church established by Jesus Christ in this world. She is called the kingdom of heaven, because she came from heaven, Jesus Christ, the God-man, having founded her, and because it is her object to sanctify men and to lead them to heaven. We must therefore make a distinction, as to their foundation, between temporal kingdoms and the kingdom of the Church; for the former are founded by men and have in view only their temporal welfare, while the latter is founded by God himself, and has for its object man's eternal welfare.

(*b.*) The *man* who sowed the grain of mustard-seed in the field is Jesus Christ. He founded the Church, and from him comes

what the Church has and is: her members, her doctrine, her constitution, and means of grace. To him she also owes her durability to the end of time.—*Matt.* 16: 18.

The *field* in which the man sowed the grain of mustard-seed is the whole human race. For it is the will of Jesus that his Church be spread over the whole earth, and that all men enter it: wherefore he said to his Apostles, "Going therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."—*Matt.* 28. 19, 20. The whole human race is his field, because as the Son of God, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost, he is the Creator of heaven and earth; and because the human race belongs in particular to him as the Redeemer, having purchased it at the price of his precious blood. "Knowing that you are not redeemed with corruptible things as gold or silver . . . but with the precious blood of Christ."—*I. Pet.* 1: 19, 20.

2. *Which is the least indeed of all seeds; but when it is grown up it is greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof.*

(*a.*) The grain of mustard-seed is so small and insignificant that it seems to be powder. Very small and insignificant also was the Church at first. Jesus preached the gospel for three years with indefatigable zeal, and confirmed his doctrine by numerous miracles, but how many did he convert? Only a few. After his Ascension into heaven the Church in Jerusalem numbered only one hundred and twenty souls. Truly, a little grain of mustard-seed in comparison with the millions of Pagans and Jews.

(*b.*) But the grain of mustard-seed does not always remain small. Sown in the ground it springs up, and in the fertile East becomes of all herbs the greatest, tall and strong like a tree. Like the grain of mustard-seed, the Church grew, and by degrees became a tree spreading its branches over the whole earth. At his very first sermon on the day of Pentecost St. Peter converted three thousand Jews, and shortly after five thousand at one time. After that the Apostles preached the gospel beyond Judea, and with such success that after a short time there was scarcely a city in the Roman Empire without its Christians. Long and bloody persecutions broke out against the Church, but they could not stem the tide of its propagation; "the blood of the martyrs was the seed of Christians." After the lapse of two hundred years Tertullian could say to the Pagans: "We scarcely begin to appear in the world, and we constitute already the greater part in all your provinces. We fill your cities, your islands, your

towns, your assemblies, your fields, your trades, your palaces, your councils, your courts of justice; we leave you nothing but your temples." After the Roman emperors had become Christian, the Church extended itself still further and in the fourth century the last vestiges of Paganism disappeared. At present she is spread over the whole earth, and the number of her children increases every year. In our days especially, Protestants in the highest ranks of society and such as have distinguished themselves and excelled in literature and science, nay, the very cream of the great Universities, are flocking into the Catholic Church. Not to tire you with a long list, I need only mention Manning and the immortal Newman, once the shining lights of a *human Establishment*, but afterwards, as the beautiful etymology of the word *Cardinal* indicates, among the golden hinges of a *Divine Establishment*—placed high on the very top of the watch-towers of the Church, as beacon-lights for all those at sea who are floundering in the seething, turbid waters of unbelief or doubt. Thus the Church in her origin and growth resembles the grain of mustard-seed.

B. The parable of the leaven.

The kingdom of heaven is like to leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened.

1. Leaven is a sort of fermenting mixture equivalent to our yeast and well known to bakers, who use it in the dough or dead mass of meal or flour, to ferment and enliven the whole. The Pagans were a dead mass, and even the Jews had become like dough. Their exercises of religion were only exterior, without life and spirit. It was the leaven of Christianity that infused into them the germ and breath of life. At Pentecost the fermentation commenced among them. After they had heard the first sermon of St. Peter, they said to him and the other Apostles: What shall we do, men and brethren? And at the admonition of Peter they did penance for their sins and were baptized.—*Acts* 2: 37, *etc.* This spiritual fermentation continued and extended itself. The gospel aroused men to the knowledge of their sinful life, and made them conscious of their inability to help themselves if dependent on their own strength; it revealed to them doctrines and truths of which heretofore they had no knowledge, and induced them to avail themselves of the proffered means for the salvation of their souls.

2. As leaven changes a mass of sour dough into edible bread, so Christianity changed the mass of humanity. Let us take a closer view of human beings before the Christian era. They were of

the earth earthly. Seeking only what flattered their inordinate inclinations, they yielded to the evil propensities of their animal nature, and indulged in vices and crimes of every description. But mark the change effected in them as soon as they became Christians. They no longer loved the world and what the world offered to them; their heart was turned to heavenly things and belonged to God; they practiced virtues of which formerly they had no idea, such as humility, chastity, meekness, the love of enemies; and their conduct was so pure and exemplary that they really deserved the name of saints which was given to them. Christianity produces the same effects to-day in whole nations and in individuals; it renews the mind and heart of man and converts sinners into saints.

3. Just as leaven seizes all the pulverized particles of flour, uniting, enlivening, raising, and converting them into proper dough for good bread, so Christianity collected individual men into one living organism, and penetrating all human relations, institutions, and conditions, ennobled and sanctified them. Mark what I say, the Catholic Church is not a mere organization; she is a living organism and has the germ of life inherent in herself. I shall mention only a few of the effects of this Christian leaven. In the Pagan states the princes were despots who governed arbitrarily, and whose subjects obeyed from slavish fear and self-interest. The laws were destitute of a moral basis. The student of history sometimes loves to dwell upon the erudition and sagacity displayed in Roman jurisprudence. To make an elaborate and philosophic disquisition upon the origin of civil law and to enter into a recital of the defects of the various systems, would far exceed our present limits. Suffice it to say that there were most serious defects. Punishments were not proportioned to offenses. There were no institutions in which a man of moderate means could be educated, or where the poor could be relieved, or the sick attended to.

How different is it in Christian states, especially where the spirit of Christianity prevails! There the princes rule like fathers, the subjects obey like children, the laws are an emanation of the Divine Law, and have the welfare of all for their object. There are numerous benevolent institutions and societies for the alleviation of human misery and the promotion of the common good. Let us cast a glance at the family life. So long as Paganism prevailed man possessed unlimited authority in the house; the woman had no rights; she could be maltreated, abused, and dismissed; parents were allowed to expose and kill their children; servants were slaves, who were not considered human beings, but chattels, with which their owners could do as they pleased. How different it is in Christian family life. The bond of holy

love twines around husband and wife, the man commands lovingly, the woman obeys lovingly; parents consider their children as images of God, and educate them for heaven; servants are members of the family and are treated like the children of the house. Christianity originated and fostered these sanctifying and ennobling effects in all the conditions of life; it banished Pagan barbarism and cruelty, softened manners, encouraged art and science, removed from entertainments everything indecent and obnoxious, and ameliorated all the circumstances of life. If in our days these beneficent influences of Christianity are to a great extent missed from society, it is only because the true Christian spirit is growing rare among men. The leaven can not produce a complete fermentation if it does not penetrate the whole mass of flour.

Part II.

The parables of the grain of mustard-seed and of the leaven teach us:

1. That the Church of Christ is a work of God. This is evident from the following facts:

(*a.*) Jesus, the Founder of the Church, lived in poverty and lowliness, was despised and persecuted all His lifetime by the great majority of the Jews, and finally died as a malefactor on the cross. And behold! to this Jesus, the Crucified, who was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and a folly to the Gentiles, millions and millions of Jews and Gentiles are converted, acknowledge him to be the Son of God, and adore him. Is not this wonderful?

(*b.*) Twelve Apostles, men without any authority or learning, went forth into the world and preached the gospel of this same Jesus; they accepted the challenges of the most renowned and learned men, and overcame them in logical arguments. The doctrine of the cross triumphed over all the wisdom of the world. Is not this wonderful?

(*c.*) Jews and Gentiles resisted the propagation of Christianity with all their might. Persecution raged against the Christians for centuries and streams of blood flowed; but Christianity could not be extirpated, it continually gained new adherents, and finally conquered all its enemies. Is not this wonderful?

(*d.*) The Church even to-day makes demands on men, which are in direct opposition to their deeply-rooted habits, views, manners, inclinations, and passions; they are required to mor-

tify their sinful desires, to deny themselves, to carry their cross daily, to renounce pride, impurity, avarice, desire of revenge, and enmity; to live humbly, chastely, to give alms to the poor, to forgive their enemies from their hearts, to return good for evil; they are not to seek the things of earth, the things dear to and appreciated by the world, but the things that are above. And the Jews and Gentiles who heretofore had no idea or conception of these doctrines embrace them and make them the rule of their life. Is this not wonderful? So the Church in her foundation and expansion is evidently the work of God.

2. That in the spiritual life we should esteem nothing lightly, however trivial and insignificant it may appear.

(*a.*) We should esteem no good thought, word, or work lightly, because the apparently trifling good may be the seed of another and a greater, which, in its turn, may become the seed of a greater still, etc., etc. Each good act brings to the soul an increase of grace, and a stronger inclination to good, as well as a greater facility to practice virtue and to perform good works. Thus each little act of virtue may be a connecting and necessary link in a long chain of good works, stretching away over our whole lives, and ending in a peaceful and happy death. Hence, we should never undervalue the performance of any good deed, however trifling it may seem, nor neglect any, even the most trifling, of our religious duties. We know not how much, in God's Providence, may depend on these little things. We are eager enough to make or save a dollar for our worldly benefit. If we only ponder the matter well, and view it as the saints viewed it, we shall be, and with good reason, much more eager to make or save a dollar for our spiritual benefit. In this matter of little acts —little mustard-seeds of the future—we must be industrious. We must gather up and save up all we can. It is an old maxim, "Take care of the cents, and the dollars will take care of themselves." The dollar can not exist without the cent. Those who neglect little exercises of virtue, will never arrive at a higher state of perfection. Only very few of us, if any, will ever be called upon to practice heroic acts of virtue. Our way to heaven does not lie in that direction. Ours is the easier, the humbler, the safer way, viz., the faithful performance of the ordinary duties of our state of life, and the practice of those little acts of virtue connected therewith. These we must endeavor to practice, otherwise we shall one day appear before God empty-handed. As cents gathered daily will after many years amount to a large sum, so we acquire by the practice of little virtues every day a great treasure before God with which we can purchase life everlasting. The consequences in the spiritual life which may result

from apparent trifles are well illustrated by a circumstance in the life of the great St. Ignatius, for by reading the lives of Christ and the saints, from a worldly man he became a great saint and the founder of an Order.

(*b.*) And the lesson gathered from the parable of the mustard-seed as to the importance of good actions, small as they may be in themselves, is equally applicable to those so-called little sins and negligences to which so many pay but slight attention. No sin is little. One may be less than another, but as we know that sin is an offense against the eternal Creator, such a thing can never be little in itself. Consequently, if we do speak of sins as little, it is not because they are to be reputed such in themselves, but only in comparison with others. And as from one little act of virtue may ensue a series of acts, each one growing greater and greater as the series is continued, so from even a single one of those little sins may ensue a series of sins and crimes, growing more and more heinous till they end in an evil death. Small faults often repeated finally become great sins, and, unless they be repented of, merit the punishment of hell. Yes; small faults, committed thoughtlessly, frequently lead to mortal sins, which may draw eternal damnation after them. "He that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little."—*Ecclus.* 19: 1. An envious thought, which Cain did not suppress, made him a fratricide: an unguarded look at Bethsabee led David to the commission of murder and adultery; a little avarice made Judas the Apostle a traitor to our Lord and a suicide. Oh, how many there are among us who must own to a sinful thought which they did not banish at once; a careless glance of the eye, which they allowed themselves, a sensual inclination to a person, which they harbored in their heart. In fine, little things have always been the cause of many and grievous sins.

PERORATION.

The fruit of our meditation to-day should be, first, to consider it the greatest grace that you are members of the Catholic Church; for she is, as her foundation and propagation testify, the work of God; believe then what she teaches, do what she commands. Secondly, to consider all things important that concern our salvation. Avoid carefully every, even the smallest, fault; and if, from human frailty, you commit one be sorry for it from your heart, ask God's forgiveness, and promise amendment. Make use of the opportunity of practicing little virtues and good works. By so doing you may safely hope that, with the two good and faithful servants who were faithful over little things, you will enter into the joy of your Lord.—*Matt.* 25: 21. Amen.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

THE CATHOLICITY OF THE CHURCH.

The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed . . . which is the least indeed of all seeds; but when it is grown up, it is greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree. . . . Another parable he spoke to them: The kingdom of heaven is like to leaven. Matt. 13: 31-33.

Both parables of the gospel for this day have reference to the Church of Jesus Christ. The grain of mustard-seed is one of the smallest of seeds, but, sowed in the earth, it grows up and becomes a tall tree. In the same way the Church was small in the beginning, and numbered only a few members, but by little and little she spread in every direction, supplanting Judaism and Paganism and receiving almost all the nations of the earth into her bosom. A little leaven penetrates a great mass of flour, causes fermentation, and makes palatable bread. The Church of Christ also produced a fermentation in the minds of men, and renewed their hearts, so as to cause them to give up their worldly and sinful life and to serve God with fervor and devotedness.

Now the question is: Which is this Church of Christ, to which these two parables apply? It is no other than the Holy Catholic Church, for she alone possesses the marks of the Church established by Christ. Of two of these marks, Unity and Sanctity, I have spoken on the last two Sundays; to-day, I shall speak of the third—namely, the Catholicity or Universality of the Church, and show you—

I. That the Church of Christ must be Catholic, or universal;
II. That the Catholic Church is really Catholic, or universal;
III. That all the other denominations are destitute of this mark;
from which it follows that the Catholic Church alone is the true Church of Christ.

PART I.

The Church of Christ must be Catholic or universal both as to time and place.

1. *As to time.* She must exist in an unbroken succession from the time of Christ and his Apostles to this very day, nay, "even to the consummation of the world." Her universality must embrace, as it were, in a unit, the three divisions of time—namely, the present, the past, and the future. From the days of Christ and the Apostles there must be no period in the past at which the student of history can pause, put his finger down and say: There I can not find the Church of Christ. And this is evident from her destiny. Christ established his Church in order that the people of all times should find eternal salvation in her. His Church he left to mankind as the fruit of his precious blood, as the means of attaining that salvation which he merited for them by his life and sufferings and death. He left her upon earth to carry on the work, which he only inaugurated, of preaching to and teaching the world. "Go forth," he said, when commissioning the Apostles, "go forth and teach all nations." To no others was such a commission given. The only ones so authorized were Peter and his companions. The only organization instituted by the Redeemer or recognized in any way by him was that of which Peter was constituted the head, and of which Peter's successors were for all time to be the heads—manifestly the Catholic Church. She is the only institution for the salvation of men, and whoever does not belong to her, at least to her soul, can not be saved. Now, since God wills all men to be saved, the Church of Christ must necessarily continue to exist without any interruption; for if she perished, or if there were any breach in her continuity, any period of time in which she did not exist, there would be a generation or generations of men deprived of their only means of salvation, and God himself would be the cause of their eternal perdition; to entertain any such thought for a moment would be blasphemy. For this reason Christ promised that his Church should stand for ever.—*Matt.* 16: 18. 28: 20. From this it evidently follows that a religious society which did not always exist from the time of Christ, but came into existence in the course of time, can not be the true Church of Christ.

2. *As to place.* She must be found in all parts of the world, and so constituted as to suit all climes, from the ice-bound regions of the North to where the luxuriant foliage of the tropics droops into the warm seas. This universality of place is a necessary corollary of her destiny. As she is the only institution established by Christ for the salvation of mankind, she must meet men's wants, and accompany them in all their peregrinations on the face of the earth, remaining with them wherever they may think it expedient to dwell, that all may he able to enter her portals and that her members may all attain sanctity and salvation. Christ himself gives an assurance of this universality

when he says to the Apostles and their successors: "Go ye into the whole world, and preach the gospel to every creature."—*Mark* 16: 15. Also when he foretells to them that "they shall be witnesses unto him in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth."—*Acts* 1: 8. Therefore a religious society that is confined within the limits of a particular nation or nations, and has not this universality of place, can not be the true Church of Christ.

PART II.

The Catholic Church is really Catholic, or universal,

1. *As to time.* She has existed from the time of Christ and the Apostles to this very day, and will so exist to the consummation of the world, when time shall be no more. The very etymology of the word "Catholic" indicates this, for it means universal.

All the other religious denominations, coming into existence in the course of time, have particular names, and are generally called after their founders. But the Catholic Church was never called anything but Catholic. She was known by this name everywhere, even in the most ancient times, and that name she retains to this very day, and will retain to the end of time.

She has an unbroken, uninterrupted succession of Pontiffs. Leo XIII. succeeds Pius IX.; Pius IX. succeeds Gregory XVI., and so on back through the long centuries till we come to Peter, who received his commission direct from Christ at the Last Supper, in the year 33.—*Luke* 22: 31, 32; *Matt.* 16: 18, 19. If the student of history will pause in the midst of his deep research and learned disquisitions, we can tell him who was Pope at the time of which he speaks, as only a short period intervened between the death of a Pontiff and the election of his successor. And since the Catholic Church, as I remarked before, is not merely an organization, but a living organism, having the germ of life inherent in herself, a few years of interregnum will not destroy the chain of succession. Hence St. Augustine says: "We must hold firm to the Christian religion and the communion of that Church which is Catholic; and which is also called Catholic not only by her own members, but even by her enemies." For even heretics and the adherents of schism, when speaking among themselves or with others not belonging to their society, are somehow forced, whether they will or not, to speak of her as the Catholic Church. For if they did not call her by the name which the whole world gives her they would be misunderstood. The Catholic Church therefore is evidently the true Church of Christ, for if she had ever fallen away, she would certainly have received some other designation. Our adversaries, a few of whom have been silly

enough, or so ignorant of history, as to deny this Catholicity of Catholic Church as regards time, though always challenged to name the date after Christ when the Catholic Church came into existence, have not answered the question to this very day, and we repeat the challenge, knowing that they never can. It is absolutely impossible, for no matter how far we go back into the Christian centuries we always find the Catholic Church. It was on the feast of Pentecost that the grain of mustard-seed began to grow, and now its mighty trunk fills the world. The Catholic Church therefore is universal as to time; but she is also universal—

2. *As to place.* Of all Christian denominations, there is not a single one spread far and wide, North, South, East, and West, the world over, but the one known as the Catholic Church. Nor will any of them even pretend to compare with that Church as regards the number of their adherents. In Europe alone she numbers one hundred and twenty millions of souls, whilst all the Protestant denominations taken together number only about fifty-four millions. It has been estimated by careful statisticians that there are about two hundred and fifty millions of Catholics on the globe, the Protestants amounting to about seventy millions. Moreover, the Catholic Church is spread all over the world. There is no country in which she has not her faithful children and in which she is not continually growing. Verily, the Catholic Church does resemble the grain of mustard-seed, which by degrees becomes a mighty tree, in the branches of which the birds of the air rest their weary wings. The Church therefore with justice calls herself Catholic, for she has existed from the time of Christ, she is spread over all the earth, and the number of her children increases every year. And even if it should happen towards the end of the world that whole countries should fall away from the Catholic faith, the Church nevertheless would not even then cease to be the Universal, or Catholic Church. For, according to the express declarations of the Sacred Scriptures, *Matt.* 8: 19, and 24: 14, and *Rom.* 11: 25, it is by no means required that the Church, in order to prove her universality of time and place, should embrace all countries at all times. Just as the sun rises in the East, and gradually progressing illuminates little by little the nations of the far distant West, yet never in such a manner as to shine upon more than half the globe at the same time, so the Catholic Church, rising in distant Judea, soon began to cast the vital heat of her grace and the pure rays of her doctrine on all the inhabitants of the Old World. When our own Catholic Columbus discovered the New World the first thing he did was to plant the cross. Thanks be to God! the Church is shinning with undimmed splendor here to-day.

But if, on account of the sins of the people of some particular countries, her light has been there extinguished, or the warmth of her graces has grown cold, it nevertheless remains true that she illuminated and vivified them, and she will bring them grace and salvation yet, if she be only permitted to do so, and they be found worthy in the sight of God. Thus in any imaginable case the Church remains Catholic or universal.

PART III.

All religious denominations separate from the Catholic Church are destitute of the mark of catholicity, or universality. They are not universal—

1. *As to time*, for they have not always existed from the time of Christ. It is indeed true that in the early ages of Christianity there were men who held doctrines which the founders of various religious societies of later times have also held and taught. But those men were denounced by the whole Church in their own day as blasphemers and heretics; they were men from whom none of our modern religious denominations would own that they derive their origin. The present religious parties, however, can not even derive their origin from those heretics, because they do not agree with them in all, but only in a few points. Just as a Protestant is not a Catholic because he receives a few doctrines of the Catholic Church, so the heretics of former centuries were not Protestants because they agreed with these latter on some points; for one can belong to a religious society only when one professes its whole doctrine. But as Church history proves, there never has been a sect the doctrines of which agreed completely with those of any other denomination separated from the Catholic Church; these new religious societies are therefore not a day older than their founders, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin. Hence they are destitute of the mark of universality as to time; their doctrine is new; their society is new; they can not, therefore, be the Church of Christ, because she could not perish or lie buried, as it were, for more than a thousand years under the rubbish of heresies and schisms.

2. *As to place.* As already remarked, all the Protestant denominations together number only about seventy millions members, while the Catholic Church numbers about two hundred and fifty millions. They are not spread like the Catholic Church,—no, not even in Europe. There are whole countries in which there is not one Protestant congregation. For this reason alone, if for no other, they can not claim the mark of universality. Neither can they ever become universal, that is, spread in all countries; their

principal doctrine prevents this—namely, that the Bible is the only rule of faith. According to this doctrine every one who wishes to be saved must search the Scriptures. But in many Pagan nations such a thing as reading or literature even in the most elementary form is unknown. For them, according to the Protestant theory, the way to faith is barred. Moreover, the Sacred Scripture, if one wishes to draw one's faith from it, must not only be read, but also rightly understood and interpreted. Now, among a thousand persons there is scarcely one who can interpret it rightly; nay, in reality no one, not even the most learned can be always certain that his interpretation is the true and right one. Thus it is impossible for Protestantism, according to its chief doctrine, to become the common property of all men. Hence, we see that Protestants, although the work of the propagation of their faith is munificently supported, can effect nothing among Pagan nations. A single Catholic missionary who possesses nothing on his journey but the courage inspired by faith converts more Pagans than a hundred Protestant missionary societies. These societies, instead of sending devoted men to preach the divine word orally to those who "sit in darkness and the shadow of death," are content to send tons of bibles to be scattered broadcast among the poor benighted unbelievers. The duties of a Protestant missionary may be summed up by saying that he has to see that his salary comes regularly from the home society for the maintenance of himself and his wife and children and that his bibles are duty received and disposed of; and occassionally he has to make up some rose-colored letters for publication and distribution among the contributors to the funds of the society. No wonders that the labors of Protestant missionaries have been so sterile. In this sphere they recognize their want of success themselves, and do not much care for the conversion of Pagans, but turn their attention to those who are already Christians, and try to win them over to their side. Even in this their success is microscopic, and however painful to zealous Protestants the reflection, it remains a stubborn fact, staring them in the face, that a pious Catholic never becomes a Protestant, but that many pious Protestants become Catholics. Let us for a moment suppose that the Protestant denominations were spread over the whole earth, and the numher of their adherents surpassed that of the Catholic Church; they could not even then be called *universal*, because they lack the mark of *Unity*. They constitute not *one whole* body, not *one* Church, for they have not all the same faith, nor do they admit the same means of grace, or acknowledge any one common head. They are independent of each other, and resemble independent states, which are united only by a common interest.

It is an incontrovertible truth that the Protestant denominations and the other religious parties separated from the Catholic Church do not possess the mark of universality as to time and place; they *were* not always, nor *are* they everywhere; therefore they are not the true Church established by Christ.

PERORATION.

Remember the words of St. Augustine: "Outside the Church man can have everything except salvation;" he can have honors, he can pray and sing, he can have the "gospel" and preach it in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; he can have the "sacrament", but he can find salvation nowhere except in the Catholic Church. Thank God, then, daily, that without any merit of yours, he has called you to the knowledge of the true Church. You know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. Remain loyal to your Catholic faith, and live up to it. If you do, you may rest assured that you will obtain life everlasting. Amen.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

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4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

THE FEAST-DAYS OF THE CHURCH.

The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed . . . which is the least indeed of all seeds; but when it is grown up, it is greater than all herbs and becometh a tree. . . . Another parable he spoke to them: The kingdom of heaven is like to leaven. Matt. 13: 31, 33.

Both parables in the gospel for this day refer to the Church of Christ. The parable of the grain of mustard-seed indicates the small beginning of the Church and its gradual propagation over the whole earth; the parable of the leaven symbolizes the wonderful effects which the Church produced in the human family. As leaven penetrates the flour, and makes the bread good, so the Church changes man by purifying and sanctifying him. The means she makes use of for this purpose are the word of God, the holy sacrifice, and the sacraments. These three means, the word of God, or instruction, the holy sacrifice of the mass, and the administration of the sacraments, are employed daily for our sanctification. But, in addition to the ordinary Sundays and

week-days there is an extraordinary series—the round of festivals which the Church celebrates during the year. By means of these she not only increases her exertions in our behalf, but keeps before our minds at all seasons of the year one or other of the great mysteries of our holy religion. As festival after festival recurs, all the prominent circumstances in our Blessed Lord's life, death, and resurrection, are brought vividly before our minds and, in commemorating the mysteries of the Immaculate Conception, the virginal Maternity, the glorious Assumption and Coronation of our Mother and Queen, as well as the virtues of the Patriarchs, the sanctity of the Baptist and St. Joseph, the zeal of the Apostles, the endurance and triumph of the martyrs, and the holiness of that unnumbered host who are crowned and with God to-day in the kingdom of his glory, we are unconsciously meditating on the goodness and the mercy of our God, for truly "God is wonderful in his saints." These festivals, and the reflections they give rise to invite us to higher things and encourage us to persevere in the work of saving our immortal souls and to bear our burdens with resignation, if not with joy, during this brief life, knowing that it behoves us, as it behoved even Christ and his saints, to suffer and so to enter into glory. These festivals, then, shall be the topic of our remarks to-day, and we shall consider—

I. What feasts the Church celebrates;
II. How she celebrates them.

PART I.

The Church celebrates—

1. *The feasts of our Lord,* which have for their object some mystery connected with the work of our Redemption. The Church does not celebrate a particular feast in honor of the Father, the First Person of the Blessed Trinity, because this Person has not, like the other two, revealed himself to men in a visible form. But Advent is celebrated in his honor, the fundamental idea of which is: "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting."—*John* 3: 16. Most of the feasts of our Lord refer to God the Son, because it was he that assumed human nature, and redeemed us by his sufferings and death.

There are three principal feasts of our Lord, each of which forms the centre of a cycle of secondary feasts, viz., *Christmas, Easter and Pentecost.* These three feasts form, as it were, the

central sun, around which all the secondary feasts are clustered in harmonious constellations, deriving their illumination and the completeness of their mysteries from them. The holidays of obligation which occur in the Christmas cycle are the *Circumcision* and the *Epiphany of our Lord*, which disclose to us the truth that Jesus, the new-born Redeemer, is to accomplish, by the effusion of his blood, the Redemption, not only of the Jews, but also of the Gentiles. In the Easter cycle occurs the feast of the *Ascension of Christ*, which is the completion of the state of glorification into which he had entered by his Resurrection. In the Pentecost cycle we have *Trinity Sunday*, and *Corpus Christi*. Pentecost concludes the three principal feasts of the Ecclesiastical Year, and places the truth before our eyes, that in the work of our Redemption three Divine Persons coöperated: and the feast of Corpus Christi, which can not be celebrated as a feast of joy on Holy Thursday, is postponed to the Thursday after Trinity Sunday, and represents to us the truth that the Blessed Eucharist, as a sacrifice and sacrament, is the holiest treasure of the Church and the source from which unceasingly grace and salvation flow to her.

2. *The feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary*. If we consider that Mary stood in much closer relation to the work of our Redemption, as Mother of God, than all the saints, and that in dignity and sanctity she surpasses by far all angels and saints, and is their Queen, we shall not be astonished that the Church celebrates in her honor more feasts than she does in the case of the other saints. There are five principal feasts of Mary: viz., the *Immaculate Conception*, the *Nativity*, the *Annunciation*, the *Purification*, and the *Assumption*. Two of these feasts, the *Annunciation* and *Purification* show us Mary as the *Mother of God*. The days for celebrating these feasts are fixed in relation to the feast of Christmas, the 25th of December. The feast of the Annunciation reminds us of the day of grace on which Mary, by the power of the Holy Ghost, conceived the Son of God; it is the day of the Incarnation of Christ in the chaste womb of the Blessed Virgin. Since the Nativity of our Lord is celebrated on the 25th of December, the feast of his Incarnation, or the feast of the Annunciation, must be celebrated nine months earlier, that is on the 25th of March. In like manner the feast of Mary's Purification, or Candlemas day, must be celebrated on the 2nd of February, because from the birthday of our Lord, on the 25th of December, to the 2nd of February is forty days, after the lapse of which Mary fulfilled the Mosaic law of purification. In the other three feasts Mary appears as the *Mother of men*, for which reason the dates for their celebration are not fixed with reference to the feasts of our Lord. The feasts of the Immaculate Conception and

the Nativity of Mary stand in relation to each other; hence the former is celebrated on the 8th of December, and the latter nine months later, on the 8th of September. Both these feasts shew Mary to us as the Mother of men, since her conception and birth announced grace and salvation to the world, wherefore the Church on both these feasts says: "Thy Immaculate Conception (Nativity) has announced joy to the whole world." The feast of the Assumption (15th August) turns our eyes to Mary, since, as Queen of Heaven, she looks down upon us, her children, with motherly affection, and is our advocate and intercessor with Jesus.

3. *The feasts of the Angels.* The Church celebrates these feasts, because the angels are not only our friends and protectors, conferring on us many benefits both corporal and spiritual, but also because they are in intimate connection with the work of our Redemption. Thus, Gabriel announced to Daniel the time when Christ would appear, and to the Blessed Virgin that she had been chosen by God to become the Mother of his Son; an angel also appeared to Joseph at the birth of Jesus, in the fields of Bethlehem. Five feasts of angels are celebrated every year: the feast of the Guardian angels, two feasts of St. Michael, and the feasts of the Archangels Gabriel and Raphael.

4. *The feasts of the Saints.* The Church celebrates daily the feast of one or more saints, to induce us daily to venerate them, to beseech their intercession, and to imitate their virtues. The day which is celebrated in their honor is generally the *day of their death,* for this is more appropriate than their birthday. At their corporeal birth the saints were also contaminated by original sin, and therefore were not yet holy, neither had they given as yet any proofs of their sanctity; it was uncertain what course they would pursue; they were to fight first and obtain the crown afterwards. On the day of their death they had been tried as soldiers of Christ; all danger of salvation ceased for them; they were born again to eternal life. For this reason the Church calls the day of their death their birthday. Hence, St. Peter Chrysologus says: "If you hear of the birthday of the saints, do not think that it is the day on which they were born of the flesh for the earth, but the day of their transit from earth into heaven, from labor to rest, from temptations to victory, from sufferings to never-ending joys, from the vanities of the world to the crown of glory."

5. *The holy Martyrs* were the first whose feasts were celebrated in the Church. The day of their death was commemorated yearly with great solemnity by offering the sacrifice of the mass

in their honor, by publishing their names, and by reading the history of their lives and deaths. It was not until the fourth century that they began in the East to commemorate the feasts of saints who were not martyrs.

The feasts of the saints are not accidental in the Ecclesiastical Year; they constitute an essential part of it. The Church brings before our eyes the mysteries of our Redemption on the feasts of our Lord, and on the feasts of the saints she shows us how by their coöperation they have applied to themselves the grace of Redemption; she exhorts us to imitate them that we also may obtain salvation through Jesus Christ. At the same time she admonishes us to venerate the saints and to invoke their intercession, that through their merits and mediation we may obtain greater graces for our salvation.

PART II.

1. The Church celebrates all the feasts of our Lord and of the saints, both in the mass and in the divine office. In the mass she refers to these feasts in the introit, in the prayers, in the epistle and the gospel; and on some feasts of our Lord, even in the preface and canon. The same is to be said of the celebration of the feasts in the divine office. The antiphons and psalms are always chosen with reference to the mystery or the saint whose feast is celebrated; this is also the case with the lessons. The lessons of the second nocturn in particular contain a succinct biography of the saint for the day.

By the celebration of the feasts in the mass and the divine office, the Church induces us to mediate on the mystery of the feast or the life of the saint, and to excite ourselves to salutary thoughts and resolutions. As the mass especially is in itself an effectual and salutary sacrifice, the Church, by connecting therewith all the feasts, enables us to celebrate these feasts worthily and profitably. If, for instance, on the feast of the Ascension of our Lord, we ask God to infuse into our hearts a heavenly disposition, we may confidently hope to obtain this grace, because the mass is a sacrifice of petition.

2. The Church celebrates some feasts with greater, others with less solemnity. Of course, the feasts of our Lord hold the first rank in point of solemnity; then follow in succession those of the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, the angels, apostles, martyrs, bishops, priests, and other confessors, virgins, and widows.

3. The Church has ordained a preparatory celebration for some feasts. To this class belong the three principal feasts of the year, Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. The preparation for

Christmas is the time of Advent; for Easter, the Lenten season; for Pentecost, the nine days intervening between it and the feast of the Ascension. These three principal feasts and several others have also an after-celebration for eight days, which is called the Octave.

PERORATION.

You have heard now what feasts the Church celebrates and how she celebrates them. Sanctify those that are of obligation by abstaining from servile work, and by assisting at mass. Receive the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist, which will enable you to celebrate these feasts in the right spirit, and put into practice the holy resolutions which you make on these days, that you may become worthy to celebrate, with God and his elect, an everlasting feast in the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

THE CHURCH A GRAIN OF MUSTARD-SEED.

The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed . . . which is the least indeed of all seeds, but when it is grown up, it is greater than all herbs and becometh a tree . . . Another parable he spoke to them: The kingdom of heaven is like to leaven.—Matt. 13: 31, 33.

Many may wonder why Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a grain of mustard-seed and to leaven. Is the kingdom of heaven as small, as insignificant, as a grain of mustard-seed or a small quantity of leaven? No; the kingdom of heaven is large, indescribably beautiful and glorious, for God there manifests himself in all his glory and majesty, there the angels and saints triumph in everlasting joy. But you must know that it is not of that kingdom that Jesus speaks when he says: The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, or to leaven. The kingdom of heaven means here the Church of Christ on earth. The Church is a kingdom, for it has everything that is required for a kingdom, officers and subjects, a constitution and laws, and within itself all means for its own existence and the obtaining

of its end. She is a kingdom of heaven, for she is established not for the earth, but for heaven. This kingdom of heaven, the Church upon earth, our divine Saviour compares with a grain of mustard-seed and with leaven. Let us consider to-day how the Church resembles a grain of mustard-seed—

I. In her origin;
II. In her propagation.

PART I.

The Church, a grain of mustard-seed in her origin. Jesus says of the grain of mustard-seed, that it is the least of all seeds. It is so small that you can hold a thousand in your hand; it is insignificant. Small and insignificant was the Church in the beginning.

(1.) *Her founder was lowly.* What! the founder of the Church *lowly?* Is not Jesus Christ, her founder, the Son of God? Is he not God, as the Father and Holy Ghost? Is not all power given to him in heaven and on earth?—*Matt.* 28: 18. Is he not the King of kings, and the Lord of lords? Has not God, his Father, "given him a name which is above all names, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father." —*Philip.* 2: 9-12. Yes, but Jesus wished to be little upon earth, little among men, like the grain of mustard-seed among other seeds. "He is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister." —*Matt.* 20: 28. "He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man."—*Philip.* 2: 7. He was born and he lived in poverty; he was despised and forsaken by all; he died on the cross.

(2.) Contemptible in the eyes of the world was *her doctrine.* "We preach," says the Apostle, "Christ crucified, unto the Jews indeed a stumbling-block and unto the Gentiles foolishness."—*I. Cor.* 1: 23. When Jesus declares himself the Son of God, Caiphas rends his garments, and full of indignation exclaims: "He hath blasphemed," and the whole assembly said: "He is guilty of death."—*Matt.* 26: 65, 66. The Christian doctrine is to the Jews so odious and hateful that they thought they were doing a service to God by persecuting and killing the preachers of it.—*John* 16: 2. And how do the Gentiles judge of the Christian doctrines? They ridicule the Christians and call it the greatest nonsense to adore a crucified man as God; to them it is incomprehensible that Christians should humble themselves, forgive

their greatest enemies, return good for evil, give rather than take, despise temporal goods, and seek the things above. Such doctrines were diametrically opposed to their ideas and principles.

(3.) *Lowly were her teachers.* Jesus chose only twelve Apostles for his Church, who were to propagate her over all the earth. What a small numher! How shall twelve Apostles suffice to destroy the kingdom of error and sin, and to build up in its stead the kingdom of truth and virtue? And who are these Apostles? Learned men? Men of high social position? Kings and princes of the earth? No; they are common men, poor fishermen, men without learning, influence, or power. Truly, the Apostle was right in saying: "There are not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but the foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that be may confound the strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible hath God chosen, and things that are not, that he might bring to nought things that are."—*I. Cor.* 1 : 26-28.

(4.) Small was the number of *her members.* Jesus preached the gospel for three years, and confirmed his doctrine by a most holy life, so that his greatest enemies could not convict him of a fault; he did good to all, performed numerous miracles; yet how few believed in him! Out of ten thousand Jews, there was scarcely one converted; nearly all persevered in their unbelief. Even those who were converted and believed in him showed themselves weak and wavering in faith; when he was in the hands of his enemies and condemned to death his Apostles and disciples fled, and even Peter denied him. After Jesus had accomplished the whole work of the Redemption and had ascended gloriously into heaven, how did matters stand with his Church? Oh, the number of her members was indeed small. In one room, the Upper Chamber, there was space enough to hold all of them, for she numbered only about one hundred and twenty souls. The Church in her origin, then, was like a grain of mustard-seed.

PART II.

The Church, a grain of mustard-seed as regards her propagation. The grain of mustard-seed, though small, contains within it extraordinary vital power. Placed in the earth, it sprouts, gradually grows up and eventually becomes the greatest of all herbs. There is also an extraordinary virtue in the Church. She is ever under the constant watchful power and protection

of the Holy Ghost, who teaches, sanctifies, strengthens, and guides her.

"I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you for ever, the Spirit of Truth." —*John* 14: 16, 17. What and how the Holy Ghost operates in the Church, the first Christian Pentecost at Jerusalem tells us. Fortified with the spirit of light and of truth and of strength, the Apostles preach the gospel, and many thousands in Judea and Samaria are converted to the faith. In Jerusalem, in Samaria, and many other cities, Christian congregations are formed. The grain of mustard-seed of the Church springs up and becomes great, like a tree.

(2.) When the grain of mustard-seed grows up, it shoots forth its branches, which spread out in every direction. Is it otherwise with the Church? Was she not in a short time spread over all the countries of the earth? It was already granted to St. John, who died at Ephesus in the year 101, to see the Church of his dear Master propagated over the three then known continents. Pliny, the Younger, reports to the Emperor Trajan, in the year 106, that this superstition (being a Gentile, he so calls the Christian religion) has taken a foothold not only in cities, but that it has crept into villages and villas, and that the temples of the gods are left empty. Tertullian, in the second century, says to the Gentiles: "We are only of yesterday, and yet we fill all places —your cities, your towns, your fields, the palace, the senate, and the courts of justice—we leave you nothing but your temples."

After the mustard-seed of Christianity had sprouted up and become a great tree, tempests and persecutions overtook the Church in her onward career; a three hundred years' persecution broke out; many Roman emperors one after the other issued bloody edicts, and swore by their gods not to desist from these persecutions till the last of the Christians were exterminated. All that the malignant genius of cruelty could invent was employed to torment the Christians even to death. Their blood flowed in streams, and about thirty millions obtained the palm of martyrdom.

But the virtue of the Holy Ghost who dwelt in the Church was so great, so wonderful, that during the long and cruel persecutions she not only suffered no loss, but even grew stronger every day, and was propagated more widely. The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church. After the lapse of 300 years the Church had conquered the world. Thus the word of the Lord was fulfilled: "From the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is a great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation."—*Malach.* 1: 11.

(3.) *When it is grown up and becometh a tree, the birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof.* The birds of the air are the Jews and the Gentiles who entered into the Church. Oxen and sheep do not climb trees and dwell in their branches; only the birds, which are more in the air than upon the earth, seek a dwelling in the trees; only such as aspire to the supernatural and eternal, and are willing to enter the Church; persons who are absorbed in temporal things remain far off from her. Our Lord teaches this truth in the parable of the great supper.—*Luke* 14: 16, etc. It was always so, and it is so to-day. The great majority of the Jews did not become Christians. And why not? Because they were too sensual and carnal. They longed only for a Saviour who would free them from the yoke of the Romans and make them a strong and prosperous people. Jesus, who preached humility, mortification of the flesh, contempt of the world, found no favor in their eyes. There are many in our days who are convinced of the truth of the Catholic faith, but they do not embrace it, because their heart clings to the world. Yes, this devotion to temporal and sensual things is the reason why even some who are children of the Catholic Church from their birth apostatize from her. Pride, avarice, and sensuality caused the great defection from the Church in the sixteenth century. It is the same passions and vices that in our days drive many who were Catholics into unbelief and heresy. Therefore our Lord says: "Every one that doth evil, hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reproved."—*John* 3: 20. In like manner, St. Paul says that some rejecting a good conscience "have made shipwreck concerning the faith."—*I. Tim.* 1: 19.

PERORATION.

Now you understand how the Church resembles a grain of mustard-seed. Endeavor, as members of the Church, also to resemble the grain of mustard-seed. As the mustard-seed springs up and becomes a tall tree, so you must also grow in the Christian virtues and become like a cedar of Lebanon, great before God. "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."—*II. Pet.* 3: 18. Strive daily to attain perfection by correcting your faults, by extirpating your inordinate inclinations more and more, by fulfilling punctually the duties of your religion and state of life, by practicing more fervently the Christian virtues and making use of the means of salvation. A tree that grows no more, becomes dry and fit only for the fire. A Christian who makes no progress in the spiritual life, and does not grow in grace, dies to God and grace, and has reason to fear the fire of hell. The slothful servant.—*Matt.* 25: 24-30.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."—*I. Cor.* 15: 58. Amen.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

6. MORAL SKETCH.

SINS WHICH MANY PEOPLE THINK TRIVIAL.

The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed . . . which is the least indeed of all seeds; but when it is grown up, it is greater than all herbs and becometh a tree. . . . Another parable he spoke to them: The kingdom of heaven is like to leaven.—*Matt.* 13: 31-33.

A grain of mustard-seed, a little leaven mixed with flour, are apparently quite insignificant things. If we did not know by experience what their effects are, we should be led to disregard them. So in the moral life there are some things which by many are looked upon as trivial—nay, as nothing—which, however, are of the greatest importance. Such are a great many sins. Many allow themselves to be deluded by their passions, or the example of others, and consider things which are very sinful either as no sins at all, or at most, only small defects, hardly worthy of notice. The consequence of this is, that such persons, in their unhappy delusion, heap sins upon sins, and perhaps only in eternity will they open their eyes, when it will be too late and rescue impossible.

What are the sins that so many *disregard?* **They are—**

1. *Sins of the heart.* These sins are bad thoughts and desires which are entertained voluntarily and with pleasure. He who represents to himself unchaste objects, and takes pleasure in the mental contemplation thereof, sins by bad thoughts. He who not only represents to himself something bad, but also desires to see, to hear, or to do it, sins by bad desires.

Now, there are many who commit such sins of the heart very frequently without any disquietude. They have, for instance, vain, proud, revengeful, avaricious, envious, unchaste thoughts

and desires, entertain them with pleasure, and take no pains to banish them, imagining that they are of no consequence, that they are either no sins at all, or only trivial, venial ones. What a pernicious error! God looks far more to the will than to the deed. If exteriorly you lead the life of a saint, but have a corrupt heart, God abhors you, and according to the word of Jesus, you resemble "whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all filthiness."—*Matt.* 23: 27. With God the will goes for the deed. When entertained deliberately and voluntarily in some important matter, bad thoughts and desires are, like bad deeds, mortal sins. Therefore it is said in the *Book of Proverbs* 15: 26, "Evil thoughts are an abomination to the Lord," and Christ himself says: "Whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart."—*Matt.* 5: 28. The rebellious angels were damned for ever for entertaining only for an instant a thought of pride. How great will be the number of those who, disregarding the evil thoughts and desires of the heart, and neglecting to confess and amend, will perish on account of these sins!

2. *Sins of omission.* We sin by omission when, through our own fault, and without a valid excuse, we neglect to perform a religious duty. This kind of sin, too, is very frequent. Many neglect the duties of religion; they are careless in the business of their salvation, they do not often pray, all their thoughts and affections are set upon worldly things, and they devote themselves to the distractions of a worldly life. Of God, of their soul, and of eternity they seldom think. They find no relish in spiritual reading, they put off the reception of the sacraments till Easter—in fine, they neglect in many ways their religious duties, or fulfil them imperfectly and badly. Many neglect the duties of their station in life. How great is the number of parents who, as regards the education of their children, are guilty of many omissions. They do not take care that their children say their morning and evening prayers, attend mass on Sundays, and receive the sacraments; they permit them to dress extravagantly, to be out at unseasonable hours, to entertain bad company, to be too familiar with persons of the opposite sex, and to engage in immodest discourses and sinful pleasures. How many children are self-willed, stubborn, disobedient? These and many other sins of omission are little thought of, and are committed again and again without any disquietude of conscience, or without persons accusing themselves of them. We have an example in Heli, who neglected his duty as a father towards his degenerate sons, even after God by his prophet had threatened him with the severest chastisement.—*I. Kings* 3. Some spiritual writers maintain that

more people will be damned for sins of omission than for sins of commission.

3. *Sins against justice and charity.* Justice requires that we give and leave to every one his own, that we take no advantage of any one, that we do not cheat, steal, nor injure any one in his property. Whoever has sinned in any way against justice is bound to make restitution and to repair the damage, otherwise he will not receive forgiveness from God. Charity obliges us to assist the poor and needy, and to succor them as far as we can. How many sins against justice and charity are committed! Who can count all the injustices which are committed in business transactions? Goods are adulterated and sold as genuine; serious defects in merchandise are concealed, and the buyer is cheated; the highest price is asked for goods, the charges for work done are exorbitant, and people live quietly as if everything were in order. If their conscience is sometimes aroused, or if, from the pulpit or in the confessional, attention is called to these injustices, they quiet themselves with the thought: That can not be wrong; how can one get along? others are doing the same! Not a few acknowledge their injustices, but they will not be convinced of the necessity of repairing them according to their ability. They think they can shirk the duty of restitution and reparation by saying that the performance thereof is impossible for them; and yet it would be possible, if they had the will. Or they say that they will give some alms or contribute something for a charitable purpose. But they greatly deceive themselves. Injustice remains injustice, whether few or many are guilty of it, and every injustice must be repaired, otherwise no forgiveness of the sin can be hoped for.—*Matt.* 5: 26.

As many sin against justice, so they do against charity. Like that priest and Levite who left the wounded man helplessly by the roadside, they have no commiseration for their neighbor, and do not assist him, although without any sacrifice they could do so; nay, frequently they take advantage of his necessity, buying at their own figure what hard necessity compels him to sell, taking usurious interest, and charging double prices for what a neighbor is in urgent need of. Their way of acting may appear right in their own eyes; in the eyes of God it is not. "Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy."—*James* 2: 13. Sentence of the divine Judge on the unmerciful.—*Matt.* 25: 41, *etc.*

4. *Profaning Sundays and holidays.* Sundays and holidays are to be sanctified by abstaining from servile work, by assisting at mass and at the afternoon or evening service, and by pious exercises and good works. But in how many ways do not people act against these divine and ecclesiastical ordinances? And some who do

not keep holy the Sundays and holidays, but neglect their duties on those days, are not in the least troubled or disquieted in their conscience; they do not accuse themselves in the confessional of this neglect, but imagine that it is all right, though God and the Church say that it is all wrong. And why? Because they see others doing the same, taking the blind for their guides. Among the Israelites the desecration of the Sabbath had become general, and hardly any one considered this desecration a sin. But the Lord said: "They grievously violated my Sabbaths: I said, therefore, that I would pour out my indignation upon them in the desert and would consume them."—*Ezech.* 20: 13. On account of the desecration of Sundays and holidays, many Christians will die an unhappy death and perish eternally.

5. *Lastly, sins which have no serious consequences, which cause no particular harm, or which even bring a temporal advantage.* Many consider that lying is permissible when it hurts no one. They take even false oaths, in order to do a favor to a friend and to extricate him from a predicament. Such false oaths, which are common in judicial cases of assault, in defrauding the government of the custom duties or taxes, are in the eyes of many not sinful, or at least excusable, because by them they do an act of charity to others. So they also judge of many other sins; if they cause no damage, but rather an advantage, they are not considered objectionable and punishable. Especially in our days actions are judged by their success, and however objectionable and bad they may be, they are approved of if they be successfully carried out. Acute men—business men—who trample human and divine rights under their feet, and who are not deterred from anything if it only serve their purpose, are overwhelmed with honor and praise for being successful in their undertakings and accomplishing what they take in hand. What a delusion! An immoral, bad action is and remains immoral and bad, whatever success it may have. God frequently educes good out of the worst actions. But it would be ridiculous to attribute to the evil-doer such good results which were not foreseen, wished, or intended. In a sense it may be said that Judas by his treason, Pilate by the condemnation of Jesus to death, and the Jews by his crucifixion, have done an immense deal of good to mankind, for they have caused the Redemption of the whole human race by the death of Jesus. But are they on that account without sin? What sane man would believe this? St. Augustine says: "It is not lawful to tell a lie on any consideration, if thereby even the salvation of a man, nay, the salvation of the whole world, could be achieved." Henry VIII. of England wished to be separated from his lawful wife, Catherine of Arragon, in order to marry her maid of honor, Anne Boleyn. He applied to Pope

Clement VII. to obtain from him the dissolution of his marriage with Catherine. As the marriage was valid, the Pope could not dissolve it without violating the divine law; he therefore resisted the desire of the King. The dissolute monarch, blinded by his vile passion, disregarded the Pope's refusal, repudiated the virtuous Catherine, and married Anne. Nor did he stop here. In his anger, he abolished the papal jurisdiction in England, and finding a pliant tool in a servile parliament, assumed to himself spiritual supremacy over the English Church (A. D. 1534.) He persecuted all those Catholics who would not acknowledge his unwarrantable assumption of spiritual power; many were put to death, among whom may be mentioned B. John Fisher and B. Thomas More. His conduct afterwards towards his wives is too shocking to narrate. Thus was English Protestantism conceived in lust and cradled in murder. Had the Pope been as pliant in these matters as Luther was to a certain German prince, he could perhaps have prevented all these evils. But he could and would not, for he knew that it is not lawful to do wrong if thereby even the greatest evil could be averted or the greatest advantage obtained.

PERORATION.

Meditate seriously and see whether you have not suffered yourselves to be so deluded by inordinate self-love, or the bad example of the world, as not to acknowledge something to be a sin when it really is one. If that should be the case, abandon this error, which would draw upon you the wrath of God and eternal damnation. In order not to go astray, hold to the doctrine of the holy Catholic Church, for she is infallible in whatever concerns faith and morals. If ever you be in doubt as to whether a thing is lawful or not, ask your pastor or confessor and he will give you the necessary information. Be conscientious in everything, that you may be able to give a good account of your stewardship at the day of judgment. Amen.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

7. MORAL SKETCH.

VENIAL SINS A GREAT EVIL.

The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed . . which is the least indeed of all seeds, but when it is grown up, it is greater than all herbs and becometh a tree . . Another parable he spoke to them: The kingdom of heaven is like to leaven.—Matt. 13: 31-33.

Little things become great, both in the moral and in the natural world. This is the important truth which Jesus Christ proposes to us in the two parables of the gospel for this day. Insignificant and little is the grain of mustard-seed, but in the course of time it becomes greater than other herbs, a tree, in the branches of which the birds of the air dwell. Only a small quantity of leaven is necessary to cause fermentation in a mass of flour. We must not disregard and despise what is little; be it ever so insignificant, it may become something great. The grain of mustard-seed is little, but it carries within it the germ of something great; a little leaven has the virtue of changing a tasteless mass of flour into palatable bread.

We may apply these two parables to venial sins. Many consider these sins as insignificant, because they are little, but they are not; on the contrary, they must be considered as something very important. Let us meditate on this truth to-day: I say: *venial sins are a great evil—*

I. In themselves;
II. In their consequences.

PART I.

Venial sins are a great evil in themselves—

1. *Because they are an offense against God.* Every sin, even the least, is a disobedience to God, if not in great, at least in small things. No superior is indifferent when he sees that his inferiors do not obey him, although it be only in small things; he is offended. The reason is because the inferiors do not show him that respect and honor which is due him as their superior. God is our highest Lord, he can and he must demand of us the

strictest obedience, otherwise he would cease to be our Lord, and consequently our God. If we should refuse him obedience in small things, we should presume to circumscribe his supreme dominion and disregard his will: we should say, if not in words, at least by our actions: "I know, O Lord, that the inordinate inclinations which I entertain in my heart, and the faults which I commit, displease thee; nevertheless, I will not amend these inclinations and faults; I will do thy will in important affairs, but in things which do not signify much, and which thou hast not commanded under the threat of eternal damnation, thou must not expect me to obey." I leave it to yourselves to judge whether persons who are so minded and who so act do not offend God.

God is infinitely *holy*. He hates and detests every sin, even the least. In the days of Noe, God seeing the people had become degenerate and had not ceased to pile sin upon sin, said that "it repented him that he had made man."—*Gen.* 6 : 6. So much does God hate sin that he sent his only begotten Son into the world, that he, as the Lamb of God, might take away the sins of the world.—*John* 1 : 29. If we commit only a venial sin, must it not grievously offend the infinitely holy God?

God is *our greatest benefactor*, who can certainly demand of us to be grateful to him. But if, unmindful of his numerous benefits, we are cold towards him, and do not mind acting contrary to his holy will, though perhaps only in little things, must not such coldness toward his goodness displease him?

2. *Because it could be blotted out only by the death of Jesus.* Let us suppose all men upon earth had committed only one venial sin, what should be done, in order to satisfy the divine justice for this sin, and to obtain its forgiveness? Would it suffice for all men to bewail this sin with many tears, to offer all their good works in satisfaction for it? nay, to shed even their blood? No: for even a venial sin is an offense against an Infinite Being, and will, consequently, demand a satisfaction of infinite value, which not all mankind together, as finite beings, can effect. If even all the angels of heaven should offer to God all their merits and prayers for one venial sin, nay, if they assumed human nature and were crucified like Christ, this sacrifice would be insufficient for the atonement of one venial sin, for the angels are finite beings, and therefore incapable of offering to God a sacrifice of infinite value. Jesus Christ alone could make satisfaction for venial sins as well as for mortal ones. If he had not become man and died for us on the cross, neither venial nor mortal sins could be forgiven us. And should we hold venial sins to be a small evil?

No; venial sin is also an evil with which no temporal evil can be compared; neither the loss of honor, nor sickness, nor death, nor any other evil, whatever name it may have; for all temporal evils refer only to creatures, but sin is directed against the Creator whom it dishonors and offends. So the saints judged. St. Anslem and St. Thomas Aquin have repeatedly declared that they would rather burn in hell in innocence, than triumph in heaven contaminated by one venial sin. St. Catherine of Genoa said to our Lord: "I refuse not when I come to die to be shown by thee all the evil spirits in their terror and pain, for these, as compared with the sight of the least offense against thee, I esteem as nothing." In reality there can be no offense small in itself, because the supreme Majesty is always offended.

PART II.

The consequences of venial sin are disastrous, for—

1. *It prevents many graces which God would otherwise give us.* Venial sin does this in various ways. It weakens, especially if deliberately and frequently committed, Christian fervor, and the result is that in the exercise of prayer, in the reception of the sacraments, in the hearing of the word of God, we become guilty of many a carelessness, and for this reason do not receive as many graces as we otherwise should. It leads to lukewarmness, so that we neglect the good which we could do, or do it very imperfectly, and this again causes a loss of grace. It turns the heart from God, so that he withholds his graces from us. Let us imagine a servant who in the first years of the service is very zealous in the performance of his duties, but after a while becomes slothful, does indeed what he is strictly bound to do, but in less important things is not afraid to be disobedient and displeasing to his master. Will the master be as kind to him as he was in the beginning, when he served him with all fervor? Certainly not; in proportion as the zeal of the servant has decreased, the love of his master for him will decrease. Thus God will treat us men. If we love him above all things, and avoid with the greatest care even the least sin, God will give us his whole love and impart to us abundantly of his graces; but if we become lukewarm, and offend him frequently in small things, his love for us will decrease, and consequently he will not give us the numerous graces he gave us before.

2. It draws down upon us many punishments from God—

(*a.*) *In this world.* The Sacred Scriptures furnish examples. When fleeing from the burning Cities of the Plain, *Lot's wife,*

contrary to the command of the angel and out of mere curiosity, looked back. For this act of disobedience she was instantly turned into a statue of salt.—*Gen.* 19: 26. *Mary*, the sister of Moses, was, on account of a little murmuring, infected with a terrible leprosy, from which she could be freed again only by the prayer of her brother.—*Num.* 12. A little diffidence to which *Moses* gave way, when he undertook to draw water miraculously out of a hard rock, displeased God so much that he never allowed him to enter the land of promise.—*Num.* 20. Moses on this occasion did not doubt the power and veracity of God, but displayed a little diffidence, for, fearing that the unworthiness of the people would be a barrier, he grasped his rod and said: "Hear, ye rebellious and incredulous, can we bring you forth water out of this rock?" He then struck the rock twice, whereas once would have been sufficient. Moses never entered the promised land, but died on a high eminence, God having only vouchsafed him a distant view of the long-promised land.

The Levite Oza, who put forth his hand to the ark of the covenant to hold it, when it was leaning in the cart wherein it was being conveyed, fell dead before the ark of God.—*II. Kings* 6. Can venial sin be a little insignificant thing, when God punishes it so severely on earth?

(*b.*) *In the other world.* If he who commits venial sins pass through this life unpunished, a severe chastisement will be meted out to him in the next if he has not fully satisfied the justice of God for them. Faith teaches us that all venial sins which are not satisfied for here, must be atoned for in purgatory. What kind of penance will that be? A very severe one, for the holy Fathers unanimously assure us that the sufferings of purgatory far surpass all the pains and sufferings of this life. St. Augustine says of the fire of purgatory: "This fire, although it does not last for ever, is painful in a wonderful manner, for it surpasses every pain which man has ever endured or can endure on earth." Now, if God, who is so loving and merciful towards man, punishes venial sins so severely, who could believe that venial sins are only trifles?

3. *By little and little it leads to mortal sins.* Those who heedlessly commit venial sins are manifestly in a state of lukewarmness, and this always leads to grievous sins. The reason is evident. The tepid man is not solicitous for his eternal welfare, he pays no attention to the temptations by which he is frequently assailed, he practices no mortification and self-denial, he is careless and negligent in prayer and the use of the means of grace; how easy is it under such circumstances for him to fall into mortal sin, especially when God, on account of his lukewarmness

imparts to him his graces more sparingly! Hence we read: "He that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little."—*Ecclus.* 19: 1. Gregory the Great says: "If by habit we become acquainted with venial sins, we shall afterwards not be afraid of falling into great ones." St. Chrysostom assures us that he has known many who appeared as if they were adorned with great virtues, but not regarding small faults, they fell into the abyss of vices. This sad truth is corroborated in the fall of our first parents. What was the cause of this fall? Only insignificant faults. It was only through a little imprudence and inconsiderateness that Eve one day went near the tree of knowledge. This fault was succeeded by another, an unguarded glance at the fruit of the tree; the conversation into which the guileless woman entered with the serpent was the third fault. Vanity and a sensual appetite, which Eve did not resist sufficiently, were further faults. As she did not regard these faults, and put the tempter away from her, she finally forgot God, took of the forbidden fruit, and ate. And not satisfied with having sinned herself, she went and persuaded Adam, who was still innocent, also to transgress the law of God. What caused this deplorable sin which produces so much misery and suffering in the world, and on account of which countless souls perish eternally? An unguarded glance at the tree, a venial sin. "Behold how small a fire what a great wood it kindleth."—*James* 3: 5.

PERORATION.

So you see that venial sins are great evils, for they also are an offense against God, deprive us of many graces, draw severe punishments after them in this world and the next, and lead by little and little to grievous sins. Resolve never to commit a venial sin knowingly and willingly. The devil is satisfied in the beginning with a hair; he knows how gradually to obtain more and to make a rope of it, with which he draws men to perdition. If through surprise you have committed a fault, repent of it at once, and resolve for the future to be more careful and not to commit it again. Walk in the fear of God and avoid everything that is sinful, be it little or great, that you may be able to stand before the tribunal of him who will demand an account of every idle word. Amen.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

EPISTLE. *I. Cor.* 9: 24-27; 10: 1-5. Brethren: Know you not that they that run in the race, all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? So run that you may obtain.

And every one that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things; and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one. I therefore so run, not as at an uncertainty: I so fight, not as one beating the air: but I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection: lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway. For I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea. And all in Moses were baptized, in the cloud and in the sea; and they did all eat the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink (and they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ). **But with the most of them God was not well pleased.**

1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

WE MUST BE ZEALOUS IN WORKING OUT OUR SALVATION.

The Church begins with this Sunday her second cycle of feasts, the centre thereof being Easter which represents to us the completion of the work of our Redemption through Jesus Christ. That we may share the fruit of Redemption we must not be idle, for God who created us without our assistance will not save us without our coöperation. We must continually fight against the enemies of our salvation, mortify ourselves interiorly and exteriorly, and diligently avail ourselves of the graces which are offered to us for our purification and sanctification, serving God with fervor and perseverance. In the epistle for this day St. Paul exhorts us to work out our salvation with fervor, and for this end proposes—

I. Encouraging, and
II. Warning examples.

PART I.

To encourage us to be fervent in the business of our salvation the Apostle proposes to our consideration the athletes, who contested for the prize in feats of strength or agility at the Olympian games in the arena of ancient Greece. He then assures us that he himself was obliged to chastise his body by self-denial and mortification, in order to subdue his flesh and its inordinate desires. The principal feats in these ancient games were—

1. Foot-racing, wrestling, and boxing.

(*a.*) The reference to the first is evident, when he says: *Know you not that they that run in the race, all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? So run that you may obtain.* Of all these ancient Grecian athletic sports, foot-racing occupied the first place. It was held in extensive grounds, which were fenced in on all sides, and called the race-course. In the presence of an immense multitude of spectators, the competitors all started at a given signal, each straining every nerve to be first at the goal, to which was affixed the prize, usually consisting of a wreath of olive branches. The first to reach the goal grasped the wreath, and, of course, was declared the victor. Among the Greeks it was considered a great honor thus to become the champion. His name was taken up by the poets and celebrated in song throughout the land. You may well imagine how the runners vied with one another to win the prize, for only one was crowned with this vain, perishable wreath. The Apostle reminds us that we are all entered in the race of life. The goal is heaven. It is the crown than which there is nothing better or more desirable. If we run, we shall receive the prize, for not one only, but all who run will be crowned. Should not this encourage us to strain every nerve on the arena here below, that is, to be solicitous for our salvation?

(*b.*) The Apostle, in reference to the pugilists and wrestlers says: *And every one that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things; and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one.* Besides foot-racing, there were pugilistic feats, that is, pugilists or boxers fought with one another, parrying with the fists. In order to make their fists heavier and to deal more violent blows, they wound straps round their hands, securing pieces of lead or iron. When a combatant was knocked down and rendered unfit to continue the fight, his adversary was declared the conqueror, and received, as a prize for his prowess, like the champion runner, an olive wreath

The same as regards wrestlers. Combatants went into training and prepared themselves for the combat with all possible care, abstaining from sensual enjoyments and every kind of food that might weaken the body or any of its members. They also practiced frequently. St. Paul accommodates himself to the times in which he wrote, and proposes these pugilists and wrestlers to us as patterns. If these underwent such hard privations, practiced and exercised so frequently, and even jeopardized body and life in order to win a vain, contemptible prize, should not we willingly and cheerfully make every sacrifice for the incorruptible crown of heaven? Will not these ancient athletes rise up against us on the day of judgment, unless we take at least as much pains to gain heaven as they took for a mere transitory crown and a few withered leaves? And how many Christians are there who may well fear such an accusation?

(*c.*) The great Christian athlete then proposes himself as our pattern: *I therefore so run, not as at an uncertainty: I so fight, not as one beating the air; but I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection; lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway.*. The Apostle here again refers to the foot-races and boxing, and calls our attention to what he, and with him every Christian, has ahead of him. Although the athletes in the Olympic games did all that was necessary to win, yet it was uncertain at the start who would win, for in the race any one might get ahead of the other, while in the pugilistic encounter, he might meet an adversary who would parry all his blows so dexterously that it would be like beating the air, and a useless expenditure of strength, to fight such a one. Not so in the Christian race; we do not run in vain as at an uncertainty, nor do we beat the air; if we only work zealously for our salvation, heaven will most assuredly be ours. The Apostle afterwards, at the close of his life, assures us that he had fought the good fight, had kept the faith, had run his course, and that the wreath of victory was laid up for him in heaven. He next names the enemy that he fights with, the *manner how*, and the *reason why* he fights. The enemy was his own body, its inborn concupiscence, which, being his worst enemy, must be subdued. Let us then likewise subdue our body, that it may not plunge us into sin, and finally into everlasting perdition. "Let not sin reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof."—*Rom.* 6:12. We have many sad examples of the evils of concupiscence, and know to what depths it drags man when not combated and subdued. Witness Cain, Saul, Judas, etc. We must chastise ourselves.

This chastisement extends to everything that militates against sensuality, therefore to interior and exterior mortifications. Interior mortifications are the bridling of all inordinate inclina-

tions and desires, especially of self-love. To outward mortifications belong the subduing of the senses, the patient endurance of all sufferings and tribulations, as well as all exercises which are arduous to our body. St. Paul underwent these interior and exterior mortifications, lest perhaps, as he adds, after having preached to others, he himself should become a castaway. Now, if this Apostle, who had worked and suffered so much for Christ and his gospel, and had received such extraordinary graces from God, considered it necessary to chastise his body and by interior and exterior mortifications to bring it into subjection, to avoid being damned, how much more reason have we, who are so very imperfect, so weak and prone to evil, to deny ourselves, and mortify all sinful desires, if we wish to escape damnation and be saved! Therefore our Lord says: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."—*Matt.* 16: 24. Without self-denial and the carrying of the cross there is no following of Christ; without the following of Christ there is no hope of salvation. The Apostle enunciates this truth in these words: "And they that are Christ's, have crucified their flesh with the vices and concupiscences."—*Gal.* 5: 24. The example of the Grecian athletes, and especially of St. Paul, should be an encouragement to us to work out our salvation with persevering zeal and to make every sacrifice for the sake of heaven.

PART II.

The Apostle, to encourage us to zeal in the business of our salvation, brings before us an example by way of warning. This example is the Israelites in the desert, on whom God had lavished the greatest benefits, and to whom he had promised the land of Canaan as their inheritance, but who, on account of their disobedience, died in the desert and never entered into the land of promise.

1. *For I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all in Moses were baptized in the cloud and in the sea; and they did all eat the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink, and they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ.*

The Apostle here mentions a few of the benefits which the Jews received from God.

(*a.*) First, he says of them, that all were under the cloud and passed through the sea. The cloud of which he speaks was that wonderful column of a cloud, under the protection of which the Israelites passed through the Red Sea and the desert. When

Pharaoh with his army pursued them, the column of the cloud moved betwen him and the Israelites, and cast a dense darkness upon his camp, so that during the whole night he could not proceed; but to the Israelites it was a pillar of fire illuminating the night, so that without any impediment they could pass through the Red Sea.—*Ex.* 13. This cloud was for forty years a guide to the Israelites on their journey through the desert. During the day it went before them like an ordinary cloud, but at night it was a pillar of fire. This cloud was a great benefit to them.

(*b.*) Secondly, the Apostle says that all the Israelites were baptized through Moses in the cloud and in the sea. This is not to be understood as if Moses had really baptized the Jews when under the protection of the cloud they passed through the Red Sea. This baptism is to be taken in the figurative and spiritual sense, and refers to the benefits which the Israelites received from the cloud. For this cloud tempered by its shadow the heat of the day, and illuminated the way at night; in this sense it was a figure of the grace of baptism, which moderates concupiscence, and illuminates the mind of man: the sea was a type of the water of baptism, out of which the Christian comes forth safely, as the Israelites came safely out of the Red Sea after their passage through it. Moses, who led the Israelites through the Red Sea, is the type of the priest baptizing, or rather of Christ, in whose name the priest baptizes.

(*c.*) The Apostle then says that the Israelites ate a spiritual food. This spiritual food is the manna with which God fed the Israelites daily, during their sojourn of forty years in the desert. This manna is a type of the Blessed Sacrament, as Jesus himself intimates in these words: "I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven that if any one eat of it he may not die."—*John* 6: 48, 50.

(*d.*) Lastly, the Apostle says that all the Israelites drank the same spiritual drink—namely, of the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. This was the rock from which, after Moses had struck it with his staff, water flowed in abundance, so all the people could quench their thirst. This rock followed the Israelites, not really, but in the sense that the people never again suffered from the want of water, and were provided by God with everything necessary. The rock is called spiritual, because it referred to Christ and prefigured him. For Jesus is the rock that was struck with the staff, that is, with the holy cross, and out of whose side flowed his precious blood, which we drink unto eternal life; he is also the invisible rock of the

Church, through whom all graces of salvation flow to us continually on our earthly pilgrimage.

2. *But with the most of them God was not well pleased.*

(*a.*) The Israelites should have shown themselves thankful to God for these benefits and should have served him the more zealously But they did not. Bible history describes them as a very fickle, stubborn people; in spite of all that God did for them they offended him again and again, and even fell into idolatry. Therefore God was not pleased with the most of them, that is, with all who violated his commandments, and the consequence was that out of the six hundred thousand Israelites who had gone out of Egypt, only two, Josue and Caleb, entered the promised land; all the others died in the desert. Truly, a warning for us Christians. God loved the Israelites as his chosen people and showered every blessing upon them; he had called them all to enter into the delightful country of Canaan that overflowed with milk and honey. And yet, out of the six hundred thousand who at their departure from Egypt were already grown up, only two, Josue and Caleb, entered the promised land. What a small number! And why? Because they were ungrateful for God's graces and always relapsed into their former sins.

Similar will be the lot of all Christians who do not avail themselves of the graces of God for their salvation; they will be excluded from the kingdom of heaven. And as, out of more than half a million of Israelites, only two entered the promised land, so only a few men, and perhaps only a few Christians, will go to heaven. Christ emphatically says in the gospel of this day: "Many are called, but few are chosen." As the greater part of Christians do not live in the manner required for salvation, we need not wonder that by far the greater number will be lost.

PERORATION.

If you wish not to be lost with the crowd, but to be saved with the few, labor with zeal for your salvation. Take the words of Jesus to heart: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away."—*Matt.* 11: 12. Worldlings in pursuit of temporal and transitory good spare neither pains nor labor. To this extent take them for your pattern. Look to the saints of God also. Let their heroic example animate you. Like them, work and go on working with courage and perseverance. Heaven is worth it all. Amen.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

GOSPEL. *Matt.* 20: 1-16. At that time: Jesus spoke to his disciples this parable: The kingdom of heaven is like to a householder, who went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And having agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And going out about the third hour, he saw others standing in the market-place idle. And he said to them: Go you also into my vineyard, and I will give you what shall be just. And they went their way. And again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did in like manner. But about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing, and he saith to them: Why stand you here all the day idle? They say to him: Because no man hath hired us. He saith to them: Go you also into my vineyard. And when evening was come the lord of the vineyard saith to his steward: Call the laborers and pay them their hire, beginning from the last even to the first. When, therefore, they were come that came about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first also came, they thought that they should receive more, and they also received every man a penny; and receiving it, they murmured against the master of the house, saying: These last have worked but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us, that have borne the burden of the day and the heats. But he answering said to one of them: Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst thou not agree with me for a penny? Take what is thine and go thy way: I will also give to this last even as to thee. Or, is it not lawful for me to do what I will? is thy eye evil because I am good? So shall the last be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few are chosen.

2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

THE CALL OF THE LABORERS INTO THE VINEYARD AND THE PAYMENT OF THEIR HIRE.

The householder in the parable of the gospel for this day is God; the market-place, the world; the vineyard, the Church; those who were called into the vineyard are all mankind; the laborers in the vineyard are the faithful; the steward is Jesus Christ who pays every laborer his wages. The householder is said to have gone out at the third, sixth, ninth and eleventh hours. The

ancient Jews and Romans computed time differently from us. They commenced the day, not at twelve o'clock at night, but in the morning with the rising of the sun, so that their first hour, according to our reckoning, was six o'clock in the morning; their third was our nine o'clock; their sixth, twelve or noon; their ninth, three o'clock in the afternoon, and their eleventh, four to five o'clock in the evening. We are therefore six hours ahead of the Jews in our computation of time. Thus, when it is said that Jesus died at the ninth hour, it is not our nine o'clock in the morning, but our three o'clock in the afternoon.

Let us now consider the parable:

I. The call of the laborers into the vineyard;
II. The payment of the wages for their work.

Part I.

According to the holy Fathers and the interpreters of the Sacred Scripture, we may understand the various times of the day, at which the householder went out to hire laborers for his vineyard, to mean the whole space of time from the creation of the first man to Christ and his Apostles, and the life of each individual person from his birth to his death.

1. The whole space of time from the creation of the first man to Christ and his Apostles.

(*a.*) The early morning, when the householder went out is the time from the creation of the world to Noe. God had created Adam and Eve, not only for the earthly paradise, but for heaven. That they might merit it in some measure he gave them a commandment. This was their call into his vineyard. After their fall, he promised them a Redeemer, and hired them again for his vineyard. They themselves, and many of their descendants, as Abel, Seth, and all who in the Sacred Scripture are called children of God, followed the call of the divine Father, and went into his vineyard.

(*b.*) About a thousand years after the creation of the world, there was an evil time, so evil that it could not be worse. God himself said, in the bitterness of his heart, that he regretted that he had made man. He decreed to destroy by a deluge the wicked human race from the face of the earth, which he did after a hundred years. Only Noe, who was just, with his family, found grace before him; he was to become the progenitor of a better race. God promised him that he would no more punish the earth by a

deluge, cautioned him and his posterity against idolatry, and inculcated on them the duty of serving him alone. This was the second going-out of the householder, about the third hour of the day.

(*c.*) The third time, about the sixth hour, was about two thousand years after the creation of the world; he went out when he called Abraham. This going-out had again become necessary, because not only did great immorality prevail among men, but idolatry was spreading more and more, and the knowledge and worship of the true God threatened to disappear from the earth. God now made Abraham the progenitor of his chosen people, made a covenant with him, the sign of which was circumcision, and promised that in him, that is, in the Redeemer, who according to his humanity should descend from him, all the nations of the earth should be blessed.

(*d.*) About five hundred years later, at the ninth hour, the householder went out the fourth time to hire laborers for his vineyard, and this was in the days of Moses, through whom God liberated the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt, and gave them a written law. This law contained not only the ten commandments but also a multitude of ordinances for the religious and political life of the Israelites, its object being to separate them as his chosen people from all the nations of the earth, that among them the true knowledge and worship of God and the hope of a Redeemer might be preserved.

(*e.*) Lastly, after one thousand five hundred years, at the eleventh hour, he went out for the last time to hire laborers. This was that blessed time when Jesus Christ himself, God's only begotten Son, appeared upon earth, accomplished the work of our Redemption, and sent his Apostles to preach the gospel to all men. This was the last going-out of the householder, wherefore St. John says: "We know that it is the last hour."—*I. John* 2 : 18. It is not necessary for him to go out again, because the Church established by him will exist to the end of time, and never cease to invite all the nations of the earth to enter his vineyard.

2. We may also understand the various times of the day to mean the life of each individual person, from his birth to the grave.

(*a.*) Those whom the householder calls early in the morning into his vineyard are the children. It is the will of God that children serve him as soon as they arrive at a knowledge of him and of his law. For this reason Jesus says: "Suffer the little

children to come to me."—*Matt.* 19: 14. Therefore the children are purified and sanctified by baptism, and brought into the vineyard of the Lord, into the Church. To these that were called early in the morning most of us belong, since shortly after our birth we received the sacrament of baptism. Do we show that we are grateful for this grace? Christian parents, be anxious that your children should serve God in their earliest years.

(*b.*) To those whom the householder hired into his vineyard about the third hour belong the sons and daughters who are growing up. This is the loveliest and most beautiful age in the life of man, and it should not be spent in levity and sin, but in the service of God, according to the admontion of the Holy Ghost: "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the time of affliction come, and the years draw nigh of which thou shalt say: they please me not."—*Eccltes.* 12: 1. Examples: Joseph of Egypt, St. Aloysius, St. Agnes. God is especially pleased with the service of youth. But how small is the number of young people who serve God! The great majority of them live forgetful of God. And what awaits them? Probably a bad end. "A young man, according to his way, even when he is old he will not depart from it."—*Prov.* 22: 6. The sins of their youth will be on their conscience in their dying hour, like heavy stones. Young people, consider this.

(*c.*) About the sixth hour, the householder calls those into his vineyard who are of mature age. These should follow the call of grace all the more as they have already reached an age when youthful levity should give place to seriousness in order that they may redeem the sins of their youth; moreover, most of them, having a family, have the additional duty imposed on them of giving good example. He who lives on into mature age in forgetfulness of God, and disregard of his religious duties, gives little hope that he will ever be converted.

(*d.*) Those that are called at the eleventh hour are the people of declining age. Who would believe it possible that there are persons who, although sixty or seventy years of age, do not as yet think of the salvation of their soul, have still a bad conscience, and are not willing to provide for their dying hour? Oh, that these wretched people would only enter into themselves, and employ the grace which God yet gives them for the salvation of their soul! Oh, that they would daily say to themselves: I can not last long, I shall make good use of the remnant of my life by doing penance and making what atonement I can for my sins.

(*e.*) Lastly, who are those whom the householder calls at the eleventh hour, an hour before the close of the day, into the vine-

yard? They are those who are already lying on their death-bed. Because God wills not that any one should be lost; he also gives them the grace necessary for their salvation. But will they make use of it? That is the question. Dismas was indeed saved on the cross, but his companion remained obstinate and perished. St. Augustine remarks that in the case of the penitent thief on the cross we have an instance showing that no sinner, even at the hour of death, need despair; but there is only one instance, so that none may presume. The rule is: "As a man lives, so he dies." Most rules, of course, have their exceptions; but there is none, perhaps, in which the exception is so rare as in this. Let no one, then, presume and procrastinate.

PART II.

As regards the payment of the wages we must consider—

1. *At what time, to whom, and by whom the wages were paid.*

(*a.*) *When evening was come.* The evening is the end of life, death. This evening will come to us all; let us frequently think of it, especially every evening when we go to rest. As we do not know when it will come, let us live in such a manner that it will not find us unprovided.

(*b.*) *Call the laborers.* Therefore, only the laborers, and not those who stood idle in the market-place, received the stipulated wages. And yet there are so many who do not work in the vineyard of the Lord. And who are they? All those who live in mortal sin, as also those who do good not for God, but only for temporal reasons. Of these it is said; "They have received their reward."—*Matt.* 6: 5.

(*c.*) The steward is Christ; for "the Father doth not judge any man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son." It is right that Jesus, who is our Redeemer, should also be our judge. If we make Jesus our friend by faithfully following him we need not fear him as our judge.

2. *What wages did all receive?*

(*a.*) All received a penny. By a penny, heaven is understood. Not without reason heaven is called a penny. It was of silver, therefore of precious metal, to signify the greatness of the felicity which the saints in heaven enjoy; it was round, which intimates the eternity of the heavenly joys.

(*b.*) All the laborers received a penny; those who came into the vineyard at the eleventh hour, as well as those who had worked in it from the early morning. How is this to be understood? In this sense, that all who serve God will go to heaven, no matter at what age they began to serve God, whether in childhood, or in youth, in middle life or in old age. Thus the penitent thief is in heaven as well as St. John the Baptist, who in his tender infancy had dedicated himself to the service of God. But from this you must not conclude that all the saints enjoy the same degree of beatitude, for that is in proportion to their merits. "He who soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly, he who soweth in blessings shall also reap blessings."—*II. Cor.* 9: 6. Neither must you suppose it is all the same whether a person begins early or late to serve God, since he goes to heaven in the one case as well as in the other; for he who delays his conversion to the uncertain future would sin by presuming on God's mercy, and could not expect to go to heaven, but to hell.

3. *How did some act when they received the wages?*

(*a.*) The gospel tells us that the first who had gone into the vineyard early in the morning murmured because they received no more than those who had gone in at the eleventh, that is, at the last hour of the day. How is this to be understood? Is there discontent and murmuring among the saints in heaven? Are some of them not satisfied with their felicity? Do they envy those among them who are as happy as they themselves? Oh no, in heaven there is nothing but gratitude towards God, nothing but contentment, love, and concord. This dissatisfaction and murmuring refers not to the saints in heaven, but to the Jews who, as the chosen people of God, expected to be preferred to all the other nations of the earth, and imagined that the Redeemer would come for them alone, that they alone would be called to his Church and to his kingdom, and they were dissatisfied when they saw that the Pagans were treated in all things like them.

(*b.*) The householder reproved the murmurers, explaining to them that they had no reason for dissatisfaction, inasmuch as they had received the wages agreed upon, that it was only malice on their part to be jealous of others for what he had given gratuitously, and that their jealously implied an infringement of his prerogative, since he can act according to his own free will. This reproach applies to all who suffer themselves to be ruled by envy.

PERORATION.

At the conclusion of the parable Jesus says: *So shall the last be first, and the first last,* that is, the Jews, who were first called to Christianity, became the last because they continued in their unbelief; the Pagans, on the contrary, who according to their vocation were last, became the first because they received the gospel with a believing heart. This word of Christ is also applicable to the just and to sinners: the just, for the sake of their justice, are the first; the sinners, on account of their sins, the last; the former may lose their justice, fall into sin, and become the last; the latter may be converted and become the first. The just, then, must beware of building on any false security as to their salvation, and sinners must equally dismiss all fear as to the possibility of their being saved. Jesus, by saying: *Many are called, but few are chosen,* enunciates the truth that God wills all men to be saved, but that only few correspond to the will of God, avail themselves of the means of salvation, and consequently the great majority are lost. We are all called: let us, then, live in a pious and penitential manner, that we may be among the few chosen Amen.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

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3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

THE APOSTOLICITY OF THE CHURCH.

Go you also into my vineyard.—Matt. 20: 4. By the vineyard in the parable of the gospel for this day we understand the Church. It is the will of God that all men shall go into the vineyard and work in it, for the Church of Christ is the only institution for the salvation of men. As the householder in the evening paid only those who had labored in his vineyard, so only those will receive the penny of life everlasting who entered into the Church and in her worked out their salvation. St. Jerome says: "He that is not the ark of Noe, that is, in the Church of Christ, shall be swept away by the coming deluge." For this reason our divine Saviour ordained that his Church should be propagated over the whole earth and exist to the end of time. Thus

men of all times and climes are to have an opportunity of entering into the Church of Christ and working out their salvation in her. But which is this Church of Christ? No other than the Catholic Church, for she alone possesses the marks which the true Church established by Christ must have. Three of these marks have already been explained and to-day I pass on to the fourth, which is Apostolicity, and shall show you—

I. That the Church of Christ must be Apostolic;
II. That the Catholic Church is truly Apostolic;
III. That all the other religious societies are destitute of this mark;
from which it follows that the Catholic Church alone is the true Church established by Christ.

PART I.

The true Church must be Apostolic—

1. *In her origin,* that is, she must be able to prove that she is founded upon the Apostles. The reason is self-evident. Christ made only the Apostles his representatives, and gave them the commission and power to found his Church and to progagate it throughout the whole world. Now, if we can prove that a religious society has been founded, not by the Apostles, but by persons who were not in communion with them and had no commission from them, it is evident that that society is not the true Church of Christ.

2. *In her doctrine,* that is, her doctrine must agree in everything with the doctrine of the Apostles, and must not contain anything but what the Apostles taught. Christ appointed the Apostles to be the teachers of men and sent down upon them the Holy Ghost, who taught them all truth and communicated to them the gift of infallibility when preaching of the word of God. From this it follows again that a religious society which teaches anything that the Apostles did not teach can not be the true Church.

3. *In her pastors,* that is, she must have pastors who are connected with the Apostles and derive their spiritual power from them by proving their commission from them. Christ appointed the Apostles pastors of the Church and invested them, for the salvation of men, with the same power which he himself had received from his heavenly Father. Since his Church was to exist for ever, and the Apostles could not live for ever, the power given to them by Christ was to pass over to others. These certainly can be no other than their lawful successors, that is, those who received their spiritual power from the Apostles. Only the Apostles could

be the founders ef the Church, for they alone were in possession of the spiritual power; therefore, only those who received their mission from the Apostles can be considered lawful pastors. The Apostles recognized none as a pastor of the Church who had not received his mission from themselves or from one of their lawful successors. They even imposed hands upon Saul and Barnabas, whom the Holy Ghost had already selected for the preaching of the gospel, in order to empower them by this ordination and mission to perform the duties of the Apostleship. Consequently, those religious societies whose founders and pastors have no connection with the Apostles can not be the true Church of Christ.

PART II.

The Catholic Church is Apostolic—

1. *In her origin*, for she dates back to the Apostles and was founded by them. This is an undeniable fact. We can name the founder, the new doctrine, the time and place of origin of every religious denomination separated from the Catholic Church, as well as the councils by which they were condemned. But of the Catholic Church we know nothing of the kind. We may go through the history of all centuries, and we shall find no trace of her having any other founder than Jesus Christ and his Apostles. In like manner it can be proved that in the Catholic Church no new doctrine contradicting that which was formerly believed has ever been promulgated. Moreover, no time can be named when the Catholic Church had fallen away from the doctrine taught by the Apostles, whether as regards dogma or morals, and all attempts to prove anything of the kind on the part of our adversaries have proved abortive; neither can a place be mentioned where the Catholic Church in the course of time originated; history can not point to any place where the Catholic Church was founded other than Jerusalem, to no year other than the year (34) after the birth of Christ. Lastly, no lawful council can be named in which the Catholic Church with its doctrine has been condemned. It is, therefore, an incontrovertible truth that the Catholic Church was founded by the Apostles, and is of Apostolic origin.

2. *In her doctrine.* She teaches us only what the Apostles taught, either by word of mouth or by their writings. If she ever had departed from the Apostolic doctrine we should have an exact knowledge of it and be able to determine when and where this occurred. But how much soever our adversaries may exert themselves to adduce some such proof against the Church, they

will never succeed, for we can prove that every dogma which the Catholic Church proposes to our belief now was believed by the Church of the Apostles in the very earliest days of Christianity. It was the perception of this complete identity of the doctrine of the Catholic Church to-day with that of the primitive Church, which, by God's grace, was the impelling motive for the return of many in these latter times to the bosom of the Catholic Church.

3. Lastly, *in her pastors*, for the Pope and the bishops of the Catholic Church are the lawful successors of the Apostles. That the Roman Popes succeeded St. Peter is quite evident, for we can trace back the line of the Popes from Leo XIII., our present Holy Father, to Peter, whom Christ himself made the visible head of the Church.

In the other episcopal sees this uninterrupted succession is more difficult to trace back, because many of them have long since ceased, while by far the greater number were erected at a comparatively late date. Among the former were the once flourishing sees of Africa, while among the latter may be reckoned all the sees of the New World. Our diocese has seen only its third bishop, and the succession of its first bishop, the good and lamented Dr. Bailey, is fresh in our own remembrance. Possibly every priest could, by great research, trace his own succession back to the Apostles. He knows the bishop who ordained him; he may then find the name of the bishop who consecrated that bishop, and so on back through the course of centuries. This, however, is not necessary, for this much is certain, that no bishop has ever been recognized by the Catholic Church who was not lawfully consecrated and in communion with the Pope. The succession is more easily traced as regards the bishops. Every Catholic bishop can name the bishop who consecrated him, as well as the Pope who confirmed him by sending the Papal bull, all the documents being kept in the Vatican archives. Hence you see that the bishops are connected directly with the Apostles and from them derive their power, as if St. Peter were still living in Rome! Thus the Catholic Church is Apostolic *in her origin*, *in her doctrine*, and *in her pastors*.

Part III.

All religious denominations separated from the Catholic Church are destitute of this mark of truth and of a divine origin.

1. *They are not Apostolic in their origin.* History testifies this incontrovertibly, for it furnishes the names of the founders of

every sect, with the time, place and circumstances of its commencement. Thus it tells us of the Protestant sects, that only a little over three hundred years ago they were founded by Luther in Saxony, by Zwingli and Calvin in Switzerland, and by other apostates in this or that place. The Catholic Church had already existed fifteen hundred years when these *religious* parties tore themselves from her and took their place near her. Before that time no one knew anything of their doctrine; their first members were Catholics up to the time that they apostatized from the Catholic Church. They became bad Catholics, and if there had not been bad Catholics there would be no Protestants to-day. They are all new religious societies and have no connection with the Apostles.

2. *They have not the Apostolic doctrine.* If we only superficially compare their doctrine with that of the Apostles we find that both essentially differ. The Apostles teach, for instance, that the commandments of God must be kept. The founders of some of the sects teach that the ten commandments do not concern Christians. The Apostles teach, "that neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor the effeminate . . . shall possess the kingdom of God."—*I. Cor.* 6: 10; they on the contrary, that there is no sin for the Christian except unbelief. The Apostles admonish us to good works, that by them we may make sure our vocation and election; but they say that good works are useless, nay, at least venial sins.

3. *They have not Apostolic pastors.* They have no Pope; his place with them is occupied by the king or prince of the country in which they live, who certainly is not the successor of St. Peter. Their preachers are not the successors of the Apostles, for they can trace the line of their predecessors at most only to the author of their sect; with him the chain breaks, because they had neither from the Pope nor from a bishop in communion with the Pope the authority to apostatize from the Catholic Church and to form a new religious society. Therefore, the religious societies, the old as well as the new, are in no way or manner Apostolic, for they are founded neither by the Apostles nor by their lawful successors; neither does their doctrine agree with that of the Apostles; nor have they pastors who are connected with the Apostles and derive from them their spiritual power and mission. They are without orders, without a commission. From this it follows that none of these religious societies can be the true Church of Christ, because they are not Apostolic; that, on the contrary, the Catholic Church, which possesses manifestly the mark of Apostolicity, is the only true Church established by Jesus Christ.

PERORATION.

Return thanks to God daily for the inestimable grace of your Catholic faith and rejoice your mother the Church by your good conduct. Take an active part in all that concerns her; mourn with her when God permits her enemies to persecute her; rejoice with her over the victories which she obtains, and over the conquests she makes. Behave as good, faithful Catholics, that the word of Tobias may be fulfilled in the Church: "Thou shalt rejoice in thy children, because they shall all be blessed, and shall be gathered together to the Lord. Blessed are all they that love thee, and that rejoice in thy peace."—*Tob.* 13: 17, 18. Amen.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

THE WEEK-DAYS.

Go you also into my vineyard, and I will give you what shall be just.
Matt. 20: 4.

The primitive Christians were so zealous that in many places they commenced the Lenten fast before Ash Wednesday. They were accustomed in some countries to interrupt the fast for one, two, or more days in the week, but they always arranged in such a way as to have a forty day's fast by the time Easter came round. Accordingly, the fast began in some places on the seventieth, in others on the sixtieth and in others again on the fiftieth day before Easter. From this custom of commencing their fast at different times the three Sundays preceding our Ash Wednesday are distinguished as Septuagesima, the seventieth, Sexagesima, the sixtieth, and Quinquagesima, the fiftieth day before Easter.

The Church considers these three Sundays, with their week-days, as a preparation for the holy season of Lent; for this reason she uses the violet color at mass, and nearly the same rites as on the Sundays during Lent. We are therefore not to devote this time, with the children of the world, to levity, to sinful enjoyments and dissipations, but to the service of God for the

salvation of our souls. The gospel for this day, which contains the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, exhorts us to do this. If we wish to receive the penny of life everlasting, we must work in the vineyard, that is, we must serve God zealously as long as we live, not only on Sundays and holidays but also on week-days. As I have already given you the necessary instruction as to the observance of Sundays and holidays, I shall speak to-day of the week-days, and explain to you—

I. What names and what significance they have;
II. How we, as Christians, should sanctify them.

PART I.

The week-days have an *ecclesiastical* and a *civil name.*

1. In the *language of the Church* all week-days, with the exception of Saturday, which is named the *Sabbath*, are called *ferias.* Sunday is considered the first feria, therefore Monday is called the second feria, and so on, Friday being the sixth feria, after which comes the last day of the week, Saturday, or the Sabbath. The Latin word *feria* signifies a *feast-day*, and thus all the week-days are feast-days or festivals.

Whence this name?

(*a.*) In the first ages of the Church the year was commenced on Easter Sunday, and all the days in Easter week were kept holy, the people abstaining from servile work, and assisting at the divine offices. Thus all these days were *ferias*, feast-days or festivals. As every Sunday of the year was dedicated to the Resurrection of Christ, and on this account was called the day of the Resurrection, the week-days following the Sunday were named *ferias*, although they were not kept in the same way as the ferias of Easter week. In this sense the week-days of the whole year represent to us the Resurrection of our Lord, and are, as it were, echoes of this mystery. Hence, Origen, says: "The Christians look upon all days as the day of the Lord, and even as Easter day, because the heavenly Lamb offers himself daily for them, and they receive him every day."

(*b.*) It becomes priests to celebrate all days of the year by prayer, by the performance of their sacred duties, and abstaining from worldly pursuits. Hence we read in the life of Pope St. Sylvester, that retaining the names of Sabbath and Sunday, he wished all other week-days to be called ferias, to signify that the priests, free from all worldly cares and occupations, should

serve God. Hence the name *feria* was given to week-days with special reference to priests. But to the laity also every week-day ought to be a *feria*, that is, a day on which they should rest from all sinful works, and celebrate a feast to the Lord, in the exercise of Christian virtues and good works. Servile, that is corporal labor, does not detract from this celebration, for it is according to the will of God, and if done with the right intention, is meritorious for heaven.

(*c.*) Saturday, from the beginning, was called the *Sabbath*, a day of rest. This name was given to it because God rested on the seventh day, the Sabbath, and because in early times the Christians converted from Judaism celebrated this day by abstaining from servile work. But for more than fifteen hundred years Saturday has no longer been a holiday with Christians. However, it is still customary in many countries to cease working earlier than usual on Saturdays, so as to give people an opportunity of attending the Saturday evening devotions in the church and of preparing themselves by suitable family devotions for the following Sunday.

2. The civil names of the week-days are *Monday, Tuesday, etc.*, These names are of pagan origin, and are for the most part derived from the old deities which the ancient Romans and Germans venerated. Monday (*dies Lunæ*) derives its name from the moon (moon's day, contracted into Monday by dropping an "o" and the sign of the possessive case), that planet having been venerated by the ancient pagans as a deity. Tuesday (*dies Martis*) has its etymology from the old German god of war. "Tir," or "Tuesco," whom the Romans called Mars. Wednesday (*dies Mercurii*) from Mercury, a god who, according to the pagan mythology, had instructed mankind in the arts and in mercantile affairs. He was known by the name of Woden (Woden's day, Wednesday). Thursday (*dies Jovis*) from the old German god, Thor, meaning *thunderer*, called by the Romans Jupiter; hence from Thor's day we have Thursday. Friday (*dies Veneris*) from the German goddess, "Freia," whom the Romans called Venus. Saturday (*dies Saturni*) from the Roman god Saturn, who, it was said, devoured his own children. I must, for the honor of Christianity, assure you that these names of the week-days no longer signify the gods and goddesses of the ancient pagans, but only those planets or stars which have the names of those pagan deities.

3. The Church and the piety of our fathers in the faith underlaid every week-day with a mystery of our holy religion. Thus Monday is dedicated to the Holy Ghost, because he is the author

and dispenser of all graces, and we at the beginning of the week should implore his blessing and assistance for all our labors and undertakings. On Tuesday the faithful are accustomed to venerate the angels—the guardian angels in particular—in opposition to the ancient pagans, who invoked their war god Mars, or Tir, on this day. Wednesday in the early times was a station-day, that is, a day on which the Christians assembled at the graves of the martyrs, where they remained in prayer, fasting, and other pious exercises, from the morning until three o'clock in the afternoon. For this reason the Wednesdays in Advent and in the quarter tenses are fast days and days of abstinence. On Thursday the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar is particularly venerated, because Jesus instituted it on Thursday. Friday is the death-day of the Lord, and from the beginning it has been a day of fasting and penance, and is still a day of abstinence. Saturday is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, therefore on this day particular devotions in her honor take place, such as the Rosary, the Litany of Loretto, the Salve Regina, etc.

PART II.

We should sanctify the week-days—

1. *By work.*

(*a.*) The term *week-day* in derided from *work-day*, or working day, and this reminds us that we must work on those days. It may not be very pleasant counsel when I tell you to labor, but it is a duty imposed upon every one. The name of week or working days of itself intimates that we must labor on those days. While yet in the state of innocence our first parents were commanded to labor. "And the Lord God took man and put him into the paradise of pleasure, to dress it and to keep it."—*Gen.* 2 : 15. After their sin labor became still more the duty of men. They were obliged to labor not only to support themselves, but also in penance for their sins, and in order to keep from sin. "In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat thy bread, till thou return to the earth out of which thou wast taken."—*Gen.* 3 : 19. "Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy works."—*Ex.* 20 : 9. To labor is a commandment of God; therefore idleness is sinful.

(*b.*) How must we work that we may fulfil our duty meritoriously? We must labor *in the first place patiently*—that is, we must accept in our persons the difficulties of labor, remembering that labor is a work of penance for our sins. *Secondly, in the state of grace,* for he that labors in the state of sin need not expect anything hereafter for all his efforts. "If I should have all

faith, so that I could remove mountains and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth, me nothing."—*I. Cor.* 13: 2, 3. *Thirdly, with a good intention,* for this is also necessary, that our labor may become meritorious for heaven. To those who labor without a good intention, not for God's sake, but for temporal interest, the words of the prophet apply: You have sowed much and brought in little, you have eaten, but have not had enough, you have drunk, but have not been filled with drink; you have clothed yourselves, but have not been warmed, and he that hath earned wages put them into a bag with holes."—*Agg.* 1: 6.

2. *By prayer.*

(*a.*) We pray on week-days, that God may bless our labor, for "neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase."—*I. Cor.* 3: 7. The most essential requisite to secure God's blessing on our labor is prayer. On week-days we should by no means interrupt the business of our salvation. Prayer is essential to this, for without it we should refuse God the homage and adoration due to him, and deprive ourselves of the first and most necessary means for avoiding evil and doing good. Prayer on week-days is as necessary as on holidays.

(*b.*) *When should we pray particularly?* In the *morning* especially, to thank God for his gracious protection during the night, to recommend ourselves with our body and soul to his protection, and to ask his blessing. We should pray *before and after meals,* for food and drink come from God, and it is proper to ask and thank him for them. We should say our prayers before meals devoutly, that food and drink may not be used to pamper vice, but in moderation for the body's health, and in accordance with the laws of nature, which are the laws of God. Thus will our meals be to us a means of honoring God and promoting the work of our salvation. Lastly, we should pray in the *evening* before we go to rest, in order to thank God for all the graces and benefits received during the day, to offer up to him our labor, to ask his forgiveness for faults committed, and to recommend our soul and body to his protection during the coming night.

PERORATION.

Sanctify therefore not only the holidays, but also the week-days, in their own way. The working days have the same end as the holidays—they are given us by God that on them we may

serve him and work out our salvation. The difference between them is only this, that we devote the holidays exclusively to the service of God, whilst on the week-days we attend also to temporal pursuits. Perform diligently the labors of your state of life, and guard against idleness, for it is the mother of all vices "If any man will not work, neither let him eat."—*II. Thess.* 3: 10. Join prayer to work, pray in the morning, before and after meals, and in the evening. If as good Christians you labor and pray, God will help you. He will help you in life, that you may have what you need for body and soul; in death, that you may finish your course happily here, and so enter into eternal rest. Amen.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

THE HOUSEHOLDER AND HIS VINEYARD.

The kingdom of heaven is like to a householder, who went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard—Matt. 20: 1.

On all Sundays from now till Easter exclusively, the clergy, while officiating at the altar, wear violet-colored vestments. That beautiful song of praise, the *Gloria*, is not said, nor the *Ite missa est* at the conclusion of the mass. In all the prayers of the breviary and Roman Missal there is not an *Alleluja* to be found. Everything indicates penance. With this Sunday the preparation for the forty days' fast commences. What a contrast is presented by the world. This is its gay, festive time. The high, spacious halls of every metropolis, city, and town in the land are ablaze with dazzling lights, in which may be seen fluttering the moths of pleasure in the dizzy mazes of the dance, and masquerades and entertainments of every sort. Even to-day it is beckoning us on to pleasure, at a time, too, when the distant, rumbling sound of discontent and ill-humor can be heard everywhere. Human society is standing, as it were, on the very crater of a volcano that is threatening an immediate eruption, the devouring effects of whose lurid flames, smoke, and burning lava, the nations of the earth may very soon sensibly experience. But the world is blind As in the days of Noe people married and gave in

marriage, ate and drank, made merry and were unconcerned up to the time of the deluge, so it is to-day; people disregard the threatening signs of the times and the imminent upheaval of society, live in levity and impenitence, and seem likely to continue to do so until the judgment of an outraged God shall come suddenly upon them.

Let us not walk in the ways of the blind world, alienated from God; let us rather follow our Mother the Church, who invites us to-day to go into the vineyard of the heavenly Father and to earn the penny of life everlasting by diligent labor. Let us for this end briefly consider—

I. The householder;
II. The vineyard.

Part I.

The householder is God. This divine Father has three kinds of servants for whom he provides: *The angels and saints in heaven, men upon earth, and the souls in purgatory.* To the first he gives the best white bread; to the second bread of a middling quality; and to the third, bread of a coarser quality.

1. The divine householder gives to his angels and saints in heaven only white bread, so white, good, and delicious, that the like of it can not be got in the world. Of them the divine Saviour says, "that they shall eat and drink at his table in his kingdom, and sit upon thrones."—*Luke* 23 : 29, 30. He also compares the joys of the elect in heaven to a marriage feast. We must not think that sensual joys, as eating and drinking, are here meant; the Sacred Scripture only makes use of these sensible images, in order to make us understand approximately the spiritual pleasures which the blessed enjoy in heaven. Moreover, the felicity of the least saint in heaven is so great that, in comparison with it, all the joys and pleasures of the world are as a mere nothing. "The joys God prepares for his friends surpass all faith, excel all hope and love, all our wishes and desires. This beatitude can be acquired, but not estimated; it can be merited, but not described."—*St. Aug.*

The rich may eat dainties; the poor must be satisfied with coarser diet. As rich people we must appear before God, that we may buy of him these dainties; we can not get them for nothing. But the riches with which we must be provided, in order to obtain them, are not money and temporal goods, but good, meritorious works. Wherefore, labor the more that by good works you may make sure your calling and election. Many save every cent for years that in their old age they may have

something to live on, and should we not endeavor to become rich in good works, in order to be admitted to the table of the Lord in heaven?

2. As long as we live upon earth, we receive from the heavenly Father bread made only of middling good flour, that is, bread which is the medium between the white and coarser kinds. That is to say: In this life good and bad days take their turn, sometimes it is well, sometimes ill with us; sometimes we are satisfied, sometimes dissatisfied and sad; but sometimes, and this is the case with most people, it is middling, not too good, nor yet too bad. The question is, how are we to accept this middling bread? We must receive it thankfully from the hands of our heavenly Father and eat it contentedly, but always keep in view the best white bread which is prepared for us in heaven. If things go well with you, do not forget your destiny; consider that all the good things you may have upon earth are only of short duration, that you must die soon, and that of all you possess and enjoy you can take nothing with you into the other world. Therefore have no inordinate love for any temporal thing, and take care lest you offend God for the sake of temporal goods and enjoyments. But if things do not go well with you, if you must eat the bread of tears, you must not let your courage fail on that account; trust in God and be resigned to his holy will; sooner or later your bread of tears will be changed into the bread of joy, if not in this world, surely in the next. "That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory."—*II. Cor.* 4: 17.

3. At the same time, remember that if you be obliged to suffer much, you still have middling good bread to eat, and bear in mind that the heavenly Father has other domestics, to whom he gives neither white nor middling, but only coarse bread. And these are our suffering brothers and sisters in purgatory. Oh, these poor souls would rejoice and thank God a thousand times, if they had only a middling good loaf to eat; they would be glad if sometimes they had only a few days or hours during which they had nothing to suffer, and if they had no more to suffer than we on earth. But their sufferings are without intermission; there is not a minute in which they are without pain, and the pains which they suffer every moment are incomparably greater than all the pains upon earth. "This fire (in purgatory) will not last for ever, but it surpasses every pain and torture that a person has ever endured or can endure."—*St. Augustine.*

From this a twofold lesson follows for us: *First*, we should interest ourselves for the poor souls in purgatory and succor

them by prayer, masses, indulgences, and other acts of charity: *secondly*, we should make satisfaction for the temporal punishments due to sin by penitential exercises and good works, and guard ourselves against venial sins, knowing that we shall have to suffer in purgatory till we have paid the last farthing.

PART II.

The vineyard in the parable of the gospel for this day is—

1. *The Church.*

(*a.*) The *householder went out at all hours of the day to hire laborers into his vineyard.* Our divine Saviour invites men at all times to enter into his Church. Early in the morning, that is, immediately after the foundation of the Church, the Apostles, commissioned by their divine Master, went forth into the whole world, teaching all nations, and baptizing them.—*Matt.* 28: 19. At the third, sixth, and ninth hours, that is, in all centuries, the successors of the Apostles, the bishops and priests, went out and preached the gospel to all nations. At the eleventh hour, that is, shortly before the end of the world, the same will be done; even in those last days apostolic men will preach the holy faith everywhere, and it is to be hoped that many Jews and Pagans will be converted. All of us were received into the Church immediately after our birth, when we received the Sacrament of Baptism. Let us thank God for this inestimable grace.

(*b.*) *Only those who went into the vineyard* were called in the evening to receive their wages. Only Christians who are in the bosom of the Catholic Church can hope for eternal beatitude. The Catholic Church is the only institution that Christ established for the salvation of mankind. "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican."—*Matt.* 18: 17. "Whoever is separated from the Catholic Church shall not have life everlasting, but the wrath of God remains on him, because he is separated from the unity of Christ, though he may think he leads a laudable life."—*Council of Zitra*, 412.

But will all be lost who are not members of the Catholic Church? Before replying to this question, we must make a distinction: one may be a member of the Catholic Church either exteriorly or interiorly. All those who are really Catholics, believing everything that the Catholic Church teaches, belong to the Catholic Church *exteriorly*. All those belong to her *interiorly*, who, though not professedly Catholics, yet are so disposed as to be ready to embrace the Catholic faith so soon as they are convinced of its truth and divine origin; who err only in a matter of

judgment without any fault of theirs, and who endeavor to find out the truth and actually serve God according to their knowledge and conscience. All such, being Catholic at heart, can be saved. For no one is damned but by his own fault. And God will never condemn any one on account of an error of judgment. Speaking of those outside the pale of the Church, we can not judge who is in error through his own fault or otherwise, because we can not look into the heart. God alone can do this. Hence we neither can nor should condemn any one.

(*c.*) The wages, a penny, were paid in the evening only to those *who had labored in his vineyard.* Let us suppose that some had gone into the vineyard, but did not work therein, would they have received wages in the evening? Certainly not, for laborers, not idlers, are paid wages. Thus it is not enough to be members of the Catholic Church; if we wish to be saved we must work for our salvation, "Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."—*Matt.* 7: 21. "What shall it profit, if a man say he hath faith, but hath not works? Shall faith be able to save him?"—*James* 2: 14. To believe what Christ teaches us by the mouth of his Church, and to do what he commands, makes the true Catholic. He that believes as a Catholic, but lives not as a Catholic, will fare worse on the day of judgment than infidels and heretics, because he knows God and his holy laws better, and has far more means of grace than they. Let us take this truth to heart and endeavor to lead a virtuous life.

2. The vineyard is *the heart.* A vineyard requires a great deal of labor and care. If it is to bring forth fruit it must be cultivated, fertilized, and tilled. It must also be kept free from weeds. The same must be done with the vineyard of the heart, in order that the fruits of Christian justice may grow and ripen.

(*a.*) This spiritual vineyard must be diligently cultivated, and this is done by frequent and careful examination of conscience. Without such examination we can never arrive at a true knowledge of ourselves, and without this knowledge we shall never be able to amend our faults and curb our evil inclinations. The examination of conscience is the first requisite for a well-ordered life. Therefore, examine your conscience well, not only when you go to confession, but also every evening, and guard against being deceived in it by self-love.

(*b.*) This little vineyard *is to be fertilized,* that is, we must make use of the means of salvation. Such means are prayer, the word

of God, and the sacraments. If we view the lives of the saints, we shall not find one among them who was not particular in the use of these means of grace. They were fond of prayer, all their labors were one continual prayer, and they were often occupied in exercises of devotion till far into the night, very often the whole night. The word of God was everything to them; they missed no sermon; spiritual reading and meditation on the truths of religion was their favorite occupation. They had the greatest longing for the holy sacraments, and esteemed themselves happy in being able to receive them frequently. Let us imitate them.

(*c.*) The vineyard must be kept *free from weeds.* It is often a matter of surprise to the diligent agriculturist to find how quickly the rank weeds grow up, and where they all come from. He sees weeds that he never saw before in his ground, and whose seeds he never suspected were in it. But he makes up his mind at once to get rid of them, and to do so he does not merely cut or break them off at the surface, but he pulls them out by the roots. There are many weeds in our hearts. The seeds are there. There are our inordinate inclinations, all our passions, such as anger, ambition, envy, and the rank weed of impurity. These evil inclinations are real weeds, for they are bound to come to the surface, and they can never be banished, unless we pull them out by the roots. If, therefore, we wish to persevere in good, to make progress in virtue, and to keep our hearts clean and pure, the subduing of our inordinate inclinations must be our daily occupation. Let us, then, be diligent laborers in the vineyard of our hearts, and let us never grow fatigued in rooting up the weeds of our evil inclinations, for after all, where the rankest weeds are wont to grow is very often the very best soil.

PERORATION.

Go you also into my vineyard. Renew the good purpose of spending this holy season, which is a time of preparation for the forty days' fast, not in the service of the world and sin, but in the service of God. You have yet time and grace, and you can yet merit heaven by working diligently in the vineyard of the Lord. Work whilst it is day. Cleanse your conscience by a full and sincere confession of all your sins, mortify all your inordinate inclinations and passions, free yourselves from all sinful habits and connections, and work perseveringly for your perfection and sanctification, that hereafter you may obtain the penny of life everlasting. Amen.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

6. MORAL SKETCH.

THE SERVICE OF GOD.

Go you also into my vineyard, and I will give you what shall be just.
—*Matt.* 20: 4.

This is our vocation upon earth: we must serve God with lasting fervor, and labor at the paramount business of our salvation, that at the end of our day's work we may receive the penny of life everlasting. That this is the will of God Jesus teaches us in the parable of the gospel for to-day, for the householder who went out at divers hours of the day to hire laborers into his vineyard is God, who calls men of all times and persons of every age and condition into his service, that they may work out their salvation and be saved. Many of us have heretofore stood idle in the market-place of the world, and have not served God, but our sinful lusts and passions. Now, as the season of preparation for the forty days' fast is upon us, it is time for us to quit the service of the world and enter into the service of God. In order to encourage you to do so, I shall speak to-day about *the service of God*, and show you that it is—

I Our most necessary business;
II. Our only business;
III. Our unceasing business;
IV. Our most profitable business.

PART I.

The service of God is *our most necessary* business—

1. *Because God is our Lord and Master.* Every master requires his servants to serve him, and justly, because he *is* their master. God is our master far more, for from him we have not only board and wages, like other servants, but also our existence—our life. God would cease to be our Lord and Creator, he would cease to be God, if he could permit us not to serve him any more. As necessarily as God is God, so is it necessary that we serve him.

What do those do who refuse to serve God? They do what the rebellious spirits in heaven did. They say, if not in words, at least in their actions: "I will not serve. I do not recognize God as my Lord and Master. I will be my own Lord and God."

2. *Because our eternal salvation depends on it.* It is not necessary for you to accumulate great wealth and become rich. If you remain poor all your lifetime you can be saved. Lazarus, who had not bread enough to satisfy his hunger, is in Abraham's bosom, whilst Dives is tormented in the flames of hell. It is not necessary for you to enjoy good health; should you be always delicate and pass through years of sickness you can be saved. Many saints, as Gregory the Great, Lidwine, Teresa, were afflicted almost constantly with sickness and bodily infirmities, and yet they are in heaven. It is not necessary for you to live to old age; if you die in your best years you can be saved. St. Aloysius, St. Stanislaus Kostka, and many other saints who died comparatively young, were saved. But it is necessary that you serve God, for if you do not serve him you will surely be damned. The unprofitable servant in the parable.—*Matt.* 25: 24. In ancient pagan Rome every one who applied for citizenship was obliged to show his hands to the city fathers. If the hands had a thick, hard skin, and testified industry, he obtained citizenship; but if his hands were tender and delicate, like a lady's, he was rejected as an idler. God will treat us in much the same way when we appear before his tribunal. What folly therefore to wish to go to heaven, but not to be willing to serve him. And how many are guilty of this folly?

PART II.

The service of God is *our only* business.

1. Jesus Christ several times emphatically declared this truth. When the devil suggested to him to fall down and worship him, he said to him: "Begone, Satan, for it is written: The Lord thy God thou shalt adore, *and him only* shalt thou serve."—*Matt.* 4: 9, 10. Again he said: "No man can serve two masters."—*Matt.* 6: 24. To Martha he said: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and art troubled about many things. But *one thing is necessary*."—*Luke* 10: 41, 42. This one thing necessary is the service of God.

2. *Reason* also convinces us of this truth. Every laborer and servant must serve his master or employer. Suppose a servant worked industriously the whole year round, not on the farm of his master, but on another man's farm, would his master be satis-

fied with him? Certainly not; and if the servant demanded wages, would he not say to him: "I owe you nothing; let him pay you for whom you worked." All those who worked not for God, but for some one else, will receive the same answer at the last judgment. Thus the service of God is our only business.

3. But some will say within themselves, how can the service of God be our only business? We are not monks or nuns; we live in the world and have the care of many things. I answer, this does not alter the case; to whatever state you may belong, single or married, masters or servants, the service of God is your only business. To serve God means to do his holy will. If, therefore, you diligently perform the duties of your state of life, attend to your business, do your work, endure the hardships of life, you serve God, because God so wills it. Nay, when you eat, drink, sleep, enjoy a lawful pleasure, it is a service of God, because God so constituted our nature as to make these things in a measure necessary to us, and it is his holy will therefore that we satisfy our bodily wants. In every state of life one may serve God and be saved. There is no state or vocation in life in which there have not been saints.

PART III.

The service of God *is our unceasing* business.

1. There are no holidays in the service of God; all days are working days. Our vocation is to serve God always, all the years, all the days, and all the hours of our lives. The service of God begins with the awakening of reason. As soon as the child has the necessary knowledge of God and his holy commandments, and can distinguish between good and evil, it must begin to serve God; and this service of God continues without any intermission till we draw our last breath. Our Lord demands this unbroken service, when he says: "No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."—*Luke* 9: 62. And again: "He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved."—*Matt.* 10: 22. "Be thou faithful until death, and I will give thee the crown of life."—*Apoc.* 2: 10. It is not enough to serve God only for some time. "If the just man shall turn away from his justice, and shall commit iniquity. . . . he shall die in his sins, and his justices which he hath done shall not be remembered."—*Ezech.* 3: 20. Examples: King Saul, Judas, etc.

2. Think of this, young people. Many of you say to yourselves: "I am still young; I must enjoy life; when I am older I shall serve God." But among ten persons who in their youth lead a

wicked life, there is hardly one who will afterwards be truly converted. Besides, you have no lease of your life, you are not sure that you will attain the old age you so fondly hope for; you may not have time to amend your life, because you would not amend it when you had both time and means to do so. What has already happened to many, may happen to you—you may die in your sins. The man of mature age says: I have no time now to attend to the business of salvation; I am overwhelmed with so many affairs, have so many projects before me; but after a while I shall set my conscience in order. Thus all live in the hope of having many more years before them. Even the man bent down with old age, and standing, as it were, with one foot in the grave, we often see making no provision for his salvation, under the vain delusion that his time is not yet nigh. And when the Lord comes like a thief in the night, and calls them from this life, they are unprepared, like the foolish virgins who had no oil in their lamps when the bridegroom came.—*Matt.* 25. If there be some present who must own in their hearts that heretofore they have not served God, let them at least begin now to serve him with redoubled fervor, in order to repair and redeem the time that has been lost, for this may be for them the eleventh hour.

PART IV.

The service of God is the *most profitable* business, for he that serves God receives even in this life a most glorious reward.

1. *In this world.* How happy were our first parents so long as they served God. They lived in paradise and had a heaven upon earth. How happy would all men be to-day, if Adam and Eve and their posterity had served God faithfully. There would be no evil, no pain, no suffering, no death. But even now, when the curse of sin rests upon the earth, all who serve God zealously are happy. God is with them; he blesses their undertakings and grants them quiet and contented days. Proofs from history: The Israelites, who were happy when they served God. Experience proves this. Families in which the fear of God prevails enjoy the divine blessing; everything goes well. How different in families whose members do not serve God, but the devil. There is no peace, no holy joy, no contentment, nor any of those goods that make man truly happy.

It is true the greatest servants of God frequently undergo hard trials, but they are never unhappy on that account, for the heavenly consolations which they enjoy sweeten their sufferings. Examples: The Apostles went from the presence of the council, where they had been scourged, "rejoicing that they were ac-

counted worthy to suffer reproach, for the name of Jesus."—*Acts* 5: 41, 42. St. Lawrence, lying on a gridiron, jested. St. Francis Xavier, amidst great deprivations and tribulations which he was obliged to endure as a missionary, experienced such an abundance of heavenly consolations that he asked God to cause them to cease because he could no longer endure them.

2. *In the other world.* God, in his infinite goodness, has decreed to reward all his servants with everlasting felicity. What is this felicity? It surpasses all conception, it is unspeakable. St. Paul, to whom it was vouchsafed to be taken up into heaven, says that he there heard secret words, which it is not granted man to utter (*II. Cor.* 12: 4); that is, he there saw mysteries and experienced joys which can not be expressed in words. Again he says: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him."—*I. Cor.* 2: 9. Even an angel could not explain to us the greatness and quality of the felicity which the elect enjoy in heaven. And why not? Because this beatitude is supernatural, that is, it surpasses our natural faculty of comprehension. If the horse had understanding, says St. Alphonsus, and you told him that you would prepare a splendid meal for him, he would have visions of good hay and oats, for of other enjoyments he has no conception. So it is with us, when the beatitude of heaven is described to us. We call up before our vivid imagination visions of natural, temporal joys, because in our present state we have no more conception of the supernatural and heavenly joys than the horse has of the delicious viands which are served on royal tables. That we may be able hereafter to enjoy the beatitude of heaven God must raise us to the supernatural state, must give to our soul, and, after the resurrection, to our body, qualities which elevate us far above our present natural state; he must, as it were, deify us. And this immeasurable beatitude will last for ever. Earthly joys and pleasures are transitory and perishable. How different from them are the joys of heaven! These have a beginning, but no end; they will last without interruption as long as God is God—for ever and ever. "That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory."—*II. Cor.* 4: 17.

PERORATION.

This is the reward that God will give us if we serve him. And who would not be willing to serve for such wages? The wonder is, that we who know and believe all this can entertain any other thought during our whole life. Shall I serve God that I may be

saved? Who, in the contemplation of heavenly things, would not turn his heart from the vanities of the world, and exclaim with St. Ignatius: "Oh, how disdainful is the earth to me when I contemplate heaven!" Let us follow the invitation of the Master, and go into his vineyard and labor diligently till the evening of our life, that we may receive for our pay the penny of eternal beatitude in heaven. Amen.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

7. MORAL SKETCH.

HOW MUCH GOD HAS HONORED LABOR.

So shall the last be first, and the first last.—Matt. **20: 16.**

This remarkable sentence of Jesus teaches us that God judges differently from man. Acording to the judgment of the world, the higher classes of human society, the nobility, clergy, military and naval officers, physicians, lawyers, professors, artists, are the first; they are honored, respected, and preferred. The state of the laborer is the last in the estimation of the world, and, therefore, little respected. But is not so with God; before him *the last shall be first.* For this reason the Apostle says: "The base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible, hath God chosen, and things that are not, that he might bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his sight."—*I. Cor.* 1: 28, 29. Yes, the state of the laborer, mechanic, artisan, and farmer is highly respected in the eyes of God. I shall prove this—

I. From the fact that the laboring state of life was instituted in the beginning.
II. From the fact that this state was preferred when Christianity began.

PART I.

God instituted the laboring state of life in the very beginning.

1. *Before the fall of man into sin.* Man was not to spend his life in idleness, even when he was yet in the state of innocence

and dwelt in Paradise; on the contrary, it was the will of God that he should work. The Sacred Scripture assures us of this in plain words: "And the Lord God took man and put him into the paradise of pleasure, to dress it, and to keep it."—*Gen.* 2: 15. This dressing and keeping of Paradise was not painful, hard labor, but it was nevertheless labor, which, according to the express command of God, man was to undergo From this we see that the laboring state was instituted in those happy days even when man lived in the purest innocence; it was instituted in Paradise, that garden which brought forth an abundance of fruit of every kind—instituted in that happy state when there was as yet no sin or sorrow, no tribulations or afflictions. And this precept to till the earth was the first that went forth from the mouth of God to man; it was given to our first parents even before they were forbidden to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. A laboring family, therefore, was the first family upon earth, which is a clear proof that the principal task of man, in as far as he belongs to the natural order, is manual labor, and that the whole fabric of human society should rest on the laboring state, as the edifice on its foundation. Labor, therefore, is by no means a necessary consequence of sin, but an institution ordained by God while man was yet in the state of grace, and if sin had never found an entrance into the world, and if all men still possessed original innocence and sanctity, they should work, for "man is born to labor, and the bird to fly." —*Job.* 5: 7.

2. After the fall of man, God renewed the precept of labor, and made it harder by the addition of these words: "In the sweat of thy face thou shall eat bread, till thou return to the earth out of which thou wast taken."—*Gen.* 3: 19. In the state of innocence labor was without any exertion, more a recreation than an occupation, and such as not to diminish, but to increase happiness. In the state of lost innocence labor was to be a means against sin, and an exercise of penance; in order to become so, it was to bring pains and difficulties in its train. If we bear patiently, and for the love of God, the difficulties connected with labor, we can atone for the temporal punishments due to our sins, and gather a great treasure of merits for heaven. Moreover, labor is one of the most effectual means of guarding ourselves against sin, for it subdues and weakens the passions of the flesh, frees us from sinful thoughts and desires, banishes temptations, and strengthens and encourages us to everything good. "The roots of labor are bitter, but its fruits are sweet."—*Laertius.*

The laboring state is a very important one; it is the first that was in the world, the state which God instituted before the fall, and which, after the fall, he remodeled in this way, that, on

account of the pains and difficulties connected with it, it should become a means for the obtaining of eternal beatitude. Should you not, therefore, highly esteem the laboring state, and consider yourselves happy in belonging to it?

PART II.

But what must raise the laboring state of life in our estimation still more is, that it was preferred before all others when Christianity began.

1. How much has Jesus Christ honored the laboring state of life and preferred it before all others!

(*a.*) Whom did he choose for his mother? A virgin, who was indeed descended from the royal house of David, but who lived in a state of poverty and gained a livelihood by the work of her own hands. Whom did he choose for his foster-father? A poor carpenter. So the salvation of the world, in a certain sense, came forth from the laboring class.

(*b.*) But Jesus Christ, the Son of God, would have not only a foster-father and a mother who belonged to the laboring class, but he would also belong to it himself up to his thirtieth year. During all this time he lived in poverty, and worked as hard as any of you; like every laborer, he earned and ate his bread in the sweat of his face. Not only because he lived in the house of Joseph, but also because he underwent all domestic labors and assisted his foster-father in his shop, he was generally looked upon as the son of Joseph, the carpenter.

(*c.*) If we contemplate our divine Saviour in his public life, we find that he was principally active *for the laboring classes.* Who were they in whose midst he sojourned, among whom he preached so often and performed miracles? They were the people belonging to the laboring class. To them he spoke first, for them he showed special affection, on them he conferred the greatest benefits. "The poor (people of the laboring class) have the gospel preached to them."—*Matt.* 11: 5. It is to the afflicted, and such as groaned under the burden of labor, that he addresses himself in these loving words: "Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you."—*Matt.* 11: 28. Who were the thousands that he fed in the desert? They were the poor people, who belonged to the laboring class, for if they had been of the higher classes, and rich, they would, scarcely have been satisfied with such a frugal meal of barley bread and fish, and if Jesus had sent them away unfed, they would not have been in danger of fainting on the way, for they would have certainly

provided themselves with money for traveling expenses. How much Jesus loves the laboring state and prefers it to others, we see exemplified in the sick servant of the centurion of Capharnaum. Jesus declared himself ready at once to come to his house, in order to heal his servant. He treated quite differently the royal officer, who requested him to come to him and heal his sick son. He did not say that he would come to his house, but healed his son only after repeated entreaties.

(*d.*) From which class did our Lord choose his Apostles? From the class of so-called respectable people, the rich and learned? No, he took almost all of them from that class of people to which you belong; several of them were poor fishermen, owning scarcely more than their fishing tackle; the rest, with the exception of Matthew, earned their daily bread by manual labor. And Jesus chose these poor laborers for vessels of his grace, and through them renewed the face of the earth.

2. What did the Apostles think of manual labor after Christ had chosen and sent them to preach the gospel to all the nations of the earth? Did they lay aside their former occupation? No, on the contrary, as far as compatible with their holy calling, they continued their trades. Thus we know that Peter, Andrew and John, and other Apostles were frequently engaged in catching fish long after they had become disciples of our Lord. St. Paul, who had learned the trade of a tentmaker, frequently mentions that he supported himself by the work of his hands. Thus he says: "I have not coveted any man's silver, gold, or apparel, as you yourselves know, for such things as were needful for me, and for them are with me, these hands have furnished."—*Acts* 20: 33, 34. And again: "For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; working night and day, lest we should be chargeable to any of you, we preached among you the gospel of God." *I. Thess.* 2: 9. We also read in the Acts of the Apostles that he worked in the city of Corinth for some time as tent-maker for a certain Jew named Aquila.

The Apostles not only worked themselves, but they also exhorted all the believers to lead an active, industrious life. Thus St. Paul writes to the Christians of Thessalonica: "Use your endeavor to be quiet, and do your own business, and work with your own hands, as we commanded you."—*I. Thess.* 4: 11. And again: "We declared to you, that if any man will not work, neither let him eat, for we have heard that there are some among you who walk disorderly, working not at all, but curiously meddling. Now, we charge them that are such, and beseech them by the Lord Jesus Christ, that, working with silence, they would eat their own bread."—*II. Thess.* 3: 10, 12.

PERORATION.

The laboring state of life is, indeed, an honorable one, because it was established at the beginning of the world, and was preferred before all other states when Christianity began. Deem yourselves happy that you belong to this state, and live in such a way that you may be an honor to it. Labor for Christ, be active and industrious at your trade or avocation in life, not merely on account of your temporal subsistence or from earthly motives, but also on account of God, to do his holy will and to honor him by your labor. "Whatsoever you do in word or in work, all things do ye in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."—*Col.* 3: 17. Labor with Christ, that is, in union with him, in the state of grace. Guard yourselves against sins which are so frequently committed at work, such as impatience, cursing, blaspheming, unchaste discourses and vile jokes, injustice and cheating, desecrations of Sundays and holidays. Sanctify your work by pious thoughts and ejaculations, and thus lead a pious life, that on the day of judgment you may be found faithful servants of God and worthy of being rewarded with the eternal beatitude of heaven. Amen.





SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

EPISTLE. *II. Cor.* 11: 19 to chap. 12, 9. Brethren: You gladly suffer the foolish, whereas yourselves are wise. For you suffer if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take from you, if a man be lifted up, if a man strike you on the face. I speak according to dishonor, as if we had been weak in this part. Wherein if any man dare (I speak foolishly), I dare also. They are Hebrews; so am I. They are Israelites; so am I. They are the seed of Abraham; so am I. They are the ministers of Christ; (I speak as one less wise) I am more; in many more labors, in prisons more frequently, in stripes above measure, in deaths often. Of the Jews five times did I receive forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once I was stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I was in the depth of the sea; in journeying often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils from my own nation, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils from false brethren: in labor and painfulness, in much watchings, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things which are without, my daily instance, the solicitude for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is scandalized, and I am not on fire? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things that concern my infirmity. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed for ever, knoweth that I lie not. At Damascus the governor of the nation, under Aretas the king, guarded the city of the Damascenes to apprehend me. And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and so escaped his hands. If I must glory (it is not expedient indeed), but I will come to the visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ above fourteen years ago (whether in the body I know not, or out of the body, I know not, God knoweth); such an one rapt even to the third heaven. And I know such a man (whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell, God knoweth); that he was caught up into paradise; and heard secret words which it is not granted to man to utter. For such an one I will glory; but for myself I will glory nothing, but in my infirmities. For though I should have a mind to glory,

I shall not be foolish; for I will say the truth. But I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth in me, or anything he heareth from me. And lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me, there was given me a sting of my flesh, and an angel of Satan, to buffet me. For which thing thrice I besought the Lord, that it might depart from me; and he said to me: My grace is sufficient for thee; for power is made perfect in infirmity. Gladly, therefore, will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

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1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

IN WHAT THE APOSTLE GLORIES.

The whole epistle for this Sunday is little else than a panegyric pronounced by St. Paul upon himself. But how does it come that the great Apostle can, consistently with humility, eulogize himself? Does it not appear to savor a little of conceit or vanity? Oh, no; in so writing he had nothing in view but the honor of God and the salvation of the Corinthians. In the Christian congregation at Corinth, which St. Paul himself had founded, false teachers had arisen, who distorted Christian truth, endeavored to make the Christians half-Jews, and boasted of being the true teachers and apostles of Christ, speaking contemptuously of the Apostles, and particularly of St. Paul. The latter therefore saw that it was necessary to rise against these false teachers and to defend himself against their slander and calumny, because the Corinthians were in great danger of being seduced by them.

Let us study the contents of the epistle for this day. St. Paul glories—

I. In his lineage and office;
II. In his sufferings as an Apostle;
III. In his heavenly rapture.

Part I.

St. Paul glories in his lineage and office.

1. The Apostle of the Gentiles reproves the Christians at Corinth for allowing themselves to be duped and treated so infamously by the false teachers, and then says that he could glory in all those things of which they boasted. They glory, he says, in being Hebrews, that is descendants of Heber, the great-grand-

father of Abraham, who alone, in the confusion of languages at Babel, is said to have preserved the true faith and the ancient language; they boast of being Israelites, that is, the lineal descendants of Jacob, and not such as before were Gentiles, but who, being circumcised, afterwards embraced Judaism; they also boast of having the patriarch Jacob for their progenitor, and therefore of being children of the promise; and lastly, that they are ministers of Christ and apostles, and indeed such as alone understand the gospel and preach it without error. St. Paul, in reply to these vauntings of the false teachers, shows that he is a Hebrew, an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, and a minister of Christ, and that he could glory in these things, if he cared about glorying. Moreover, he intimates to the Corinthians that, even if those false teachers were ministers of Christ, which, however, they were not, he would have a superior claim to this name, because he had endured far more tribulations than they. The Apostle never thought of presuming on his pedigree from Abraham, for he knew that with God there is no regard of persons, and the Gentiles were called to Christianity as well as the Jews, and were to have part in the grace of Redemption. Much less was he proud of his Apostolic office, for he calls himself the least of the Apostles, and not worthy to be called an Apostle, because he had persecuted the Church.—*I. Cor.* 15: 9.

There are some, who, I know not why, presume a great deal on their lineage and station in life. How foolish! Is it any merit of theirs that they descend from renowned, respectable, or aristocratic parents, occupy a higher station in society, or own more acres and more money than many of their fellow-beings? Is not "every best gift and every perfect gift from above, coming down from the Father of lights?"—*James* 1: 17. Must we not say to every one, whoever he may be: "What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received?"—*I. Cor.* 4: 7. Beware of glorying on account of your station, or temporal goods and advantages, and beware of boasting of these things, much less of thinking yourselves better than others and despising them: on the contrary give the honor to God, walk in humility and holy fear, considering that of them to whom much has been given, much will be demanded.

St. Paul fulfilled all the duties of his vocation with commendable zeal. He was ever most active in the preaching of the gospel; to glorify the name of Jesus, and to save souls, was his study day and night; all that has value in the eyes of men, honor and reputation, rest and convenience, liberty and life, he sacrificed in his service. Let every one fulfil the duties of his state of life with conscientious fidelity, and not regard the difficulties which

are frequently connected with the performance of those duties, remembering that our salvation depends on this fidelity.

Part II.

St. Paul glories in his sufferings as an Apostle.

Christ had said of this Apostle at his conversion: "I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."—*Acts* 9: 16. St. Paul experienced the truth of the words spoken by our Lord. His entire apostolic career was an uninterrupted chain of tribulations, persecutions, and sufferings of every sort. He speaks to-day in general of the prisons, maltreaments, and perils of death which he endured, and singles out the following:

(*a.*) *Of the Jews five times did I receive forty stripes save one.* The Jews were not allowed to give more than forty stripes. Not to transgress the law (*Deut.* 25: 2, 3) they always gave thirty-nine only. To give stripes was the greatest punishment which at that time the Jews were permitted to inflict. And if they had had the power to punish any one with death, St. Paul surely would have become a victim of their animosity, for they persecuted him with the direst hatred.

(*b.*) *Thrice was I beaten with rods.* This was a seourging which could be inflicted only by the Romans. The person to be scourged was bound to a pillar and received the lashes upon his bare back with a scourge made of leather straps. The punishment by stripes and rods was considered as painful and dishonorable as death itself, and very often caused death.

(*c.*) *Once I was stoned.* This occured at Lystra, where the populace, instigated by the Jews, stoned him; severely hurt, he fell unconscious to the ground; they, thinking he was dead, dragged him out of the city, but God miraculously preserved his life.—*Acts* 14: 18.

(*d.*) *Thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I was in the depth of the sea.* To suffer shipwreck far from sight of land, and to be tossed about by the angry waves, holding on to a piece of the wreck, or anything else that could be laid hold of; to see the forked lightning and hear the despairing shrieks of the dying rising above the peals of thunder, is a condition so fearful as to be utterly beyond the power of the most vivid imagination to portray, or the most gifted artist to depict. St. Paul assures us that he experienced these terrors three times in his missionary

voyages, having been at one time a day and a night in the water.

(*e.*) St. Paul then speaks of the *numberless perils and tribulations in journeying on land and water.* The ever-active, never-resting Apostle seldom stayed long in one place, unless his vocation rendered it absolutely necessary. He was continually traveling: he went from Jerusalem through Arabia, Greece, Asia, and came to Rome, nay, to the uttermost parts of the known world, and preached the gospel everywhere. At that time traveling was very laborious, and we have no conception in our days of the hardships he must have endured on his journeys.

(*f.*) Add to these sufferings and tribulations the *business forced on him by his solicitude for all Christian congregations.* St. Paul had already formed Christian congregations in many places. He was frequently appealed to by these congregations in different affairs, to instruct, to advise, to correct. How much time and labor, how much grief and anxiety did not this cost the Apostle! If any were scandalized, or led into vice or apostasy, how he burned with zeal! He could not rest till the evil was repaired, the fallen person raised, the erring man corrected, and the sinner brought to penance.

(*g.*) Lastly, the Apostle mentions *that the city of Damascus was guarded to apprehend him, and that he was in danger of death.* The governor of Aretas the king, instigated by the Jews, guarded the city day and night, to render his escape impossible. St. Paul, they thought, was caught and doomed, but the Christians passed him through a window in a basket, let him down over the town wall, and thus he escaped the hands of his enemies.

2. So much did St. Paul suffer for the name of Jesus, for his own salvation and for that of others. Reflect what little similarity there is between your pleasant, easy-going life and that of St. Paul.

(*a.*) Perhaps you have spent the greater part of your life in labor and pain, in watching, in hunger and thirst, in heat and cold, and in tribulations of every description, but for what purpose? For the world, for your temporal prosperity, or much worse, for the gratification of your sinful passions and desires. Yes, the devil has also his martyrs. Provide for your temporal necessities, but at the same time neglect not the salvation of your soul. "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul."—*Matt.* 16: 26.

(*b.*) How is it with your faith? Are you, with the Apostle, ready to make every sacrifice? Ah, how many Christians are there to be found now-a-days to whom their faith is quite a thing of indifference, who care little or nothing how holy Church is daily slandered, calumniated, reviled, and persecuted, who half side with the enemies of the Church, are dumb through cowardice when she and her ministers are calumniated, and would as soon read the infamous publications, in which all that is holy is day after day held up to ridicule, as Catholic books and periodicals, and would perhaps prefer to do so. What an account will not such lukewarm, faithless Catholics be obliged to give to Christ!

(*c.*) As St. Paul was solicitous for the churches, so those among you who are superiors must be solicitous for your inferiors. How do you fulfil your duties in this regard? Do you see that your children and those under your charge live according to the ordinances of the gospel? Do you keep them under good discipline? Do you see, that they fulfil their duties of religion? "If any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

PART III.

St. Paul glories in his heavenly rapture.

1. Some fourteen years before he wrote the second epistle to the Corinthians, and seven after his conversion, St. Paul had a wonderful vision. He says: "I know a man in Christ above fourteen years ago (whether in the body I know not, or out of the body I know not, God knoweth); such an one rapt even to the third heaven." The man in Christ, of whom the Apostle here speaks, is no other than himself. It is from humility and modesty that he does not name himself. The ancients distinguished a threefold heaven: the aerial heaven, in which are the clouds; the starry heaven or the firmament, where we see the stars; and heaven proper, the abode of the blessed. This last or third heaven is that to which St. Paul was transported. Whether his transport was effected in his body and soul, or in the soul alone, the Apostle can not say. Suffice it to say, he beheld the glory of God, and heard secret words, as he himself says, which it is not granted to man to utter. By these secret words we may understand the mysteries which were revealed to him and shown to him in their profundity whilst he was rapt in heaven, but which can not be expressed in human language, and can not in this mortal life be conceived and understood. A greater grace was given to St. Paul than to Peter, James, or John at the transfiguration on

Mount Tabor, for they saw but a few rays of the glory of Jesus, whilst St. Paul was rapt even to heaven, and there heard and saw mysteries of which only the angels and saints have any knowledge. God granted him this favor to console him in his combats and sufferings, and to strengthen him in the endurance of all the tribulations which were yet before him in his Apostolic labors.

2. We are all called to that third heaven, to which St. Paul was rapt. Let us frequently meditate on the unspeakable felicity which is there prepared for us, and let us desire the enjoyment thereof. "How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord."—*Ps.* 83, 2. Let us imitate St. Paul, if we wish to go to heaven. Let us constantly labor for our perfection and sanctification and the salvation of others, as far as our station in life and Christian charity oblige us. Let us consider nothing too hard and arduous when there is a question of serving God and saving our souls, for heaven is worth it all.

PERORATION.

At the conclusion of the epistle for this day St. Paul mentions the violent temptations which he endured from Satan, and says that he thrice besought the Lord to deliver him from them, and that he received the answer: *My grace is sufficient for thee, for power is made perfect in infirmity.* And Paul humbly subjected himself to the will of God; he prayed, labored, fought, conquered, and received the crown of justice. For the past eighteen hundred years he has been in heaven. Let us do as he did. Let us pray, labor, and fight, and God will be with us and crown us as victors in heaven. Amen.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

GOSPEL. *Luke* 8: 4-15. At that time: When a very great multitude was gathered together and hastened out of the cities to him, he spoke by a similitude: The sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And other some fell upon a rock, and as soon as it was sprung up, it with-

ered away, because it had no moisture. And other some fell among thorns, and the thorns growing up with it, choked it. And other some fell upon good ground, and being sprung up, yielded fruit a hundred-fold. Saying these things, he cried out: He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And his disciples asked him what this parable might be. To whom he said: To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to the rest in parables, that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. And they by the wayside are they that hear: then the devil cometh, and taketh the word out of their heart, lest believing they should be saved. Now they upon the rock, are they who when they hear, receive the word with joy: and these have no roots; for they believe for a while, and in time of temptation they fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they who have heard, aud going their way, are choked with the cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit. But that on the good ground are they who in a good and perfect heart, hearing the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience.

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2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

WHY THE WORD OF GOD HAS SO LITTLE EFFECT AT THE PRESENT TIME.

Nothing grieves the farmer more than to see that the good seed which he has sown bears no fruit. This is our case as pastors of souls, when we see that the seed of the word of God, which we sow every Sunday and holiday, remains without fruit. And how often is this the case! There never was a time in which the word was preached so often and with so much zeal as in our days. Things, however, instead of growing better, grow worse, and a hundred sermons are not sufficient to convert our frivolous, impious men. Whence comes this deplorable fact? Why has the word of God, which formerly renewed the face of the earth, so little effect in our days? Jesus Christ gives the reason in the gospel of this day. The seed of the word of God frequently falls—

I. By the wayside, where the fowls of the air devour it;
II. Upon the rocky ground, where it can not take root;
III. Among thorns, where it is choked.

PART I.

The sower went out to sow his seed. And, as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it." Explaining these words, Jesus says: *They by the wayside are they that hear; then the devil cometh, and taketh the word out of their heart, lest believing they should be saved.* The failure of many Christians to profit in any way by the word of God comes from the devil. Christ emphatically says as much. The Philistines, after they had reduced the Israelites to subjection permitted no blacksmiths among the subject people. They took this precaution lest they should make swords and spears for themselves.—*I. Kings* 13: 19. The devil imitates the Philistines; if he had the power, he would destroy all the preachers of the true word of God, because he knows that they arm men against his attacks.

What does the devil do to render the word of God ineffectual?

1. *He tries to keep man from hearing it.* He says: Why should you listen to a sermon? You already know all that can be said. For a well-informed man like you it is only nonsense and a sheer waste of time to sit there, listening to the same old story you have heard a hundred times before. Have sense, and leave the sermon to the common people and to those simple, uneducated women. Besides, you have too much important business on hand, too much on your mind, to waste your time hearing stale discourses and explanations. Moreover, the Church only obliges you to hear mass on Sundays and holidays. There is no command to hear a sermon. Slip in, then, at an early mass, which will last only half an hour, and the law of the Church is complied with. It is dangerous to sit in the cold church during the winter, risking a bad cold. Or, it is summer now and it is too hot. You will inhale that vitiated atmosphere which must necessarily arise from so many people assembled together. This, with many other such suggestions, is the language of the devil, by which he succeeds in inducing many to neglect the hearing of the word of God! And how can the word of God produce an effect when it is not heard? Oh, that such Christians would ponder on the words of Christ: "He that is of God, heareth the words of God; therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God."—*John* 8: 47.

2. *He tries to prevent the word of God from making an impression.* Many hear the word of God, but do not follow it. Whence is this? From the devil. The seed which falls by the wayside is food for the birds; they come and devour it. So does the devil;

he takes the word of God out of their hearts. And how does he do it? By various suggestions he tries to keep man in his impenitence. You need not, he says, be disturbed and terrified by that sermon. Hell is not so bad as the preachers made it. God is pure mercy, and never created man to damn him; some of the greatest sinners are in heaven; look at Mary Magdalen with her seven devils, and the thief on the cross. These priests exaggerate everything. Why, to hear them, one would think no one could be saved. And even grant that matters do not stand well with you at present, you need not be in a hurry; after a while you can set your conscience in order. The priests themselves teach that, "where sin abounded grace abounds still more," and you will become a greater saint. Thus the devil suggests and lulls many a sinner to sleep, from which state he will never awake till he receives the demon's hot embrace in hell.

3. The devil has his confederates, and these are the unbelievers, the scoffers at holy things and holy persons, priest-haters, all of whom he employs to render his efforts for the destruction of men more effectual. After every sermon these hirelings of the devil give vent to their rage, rebuke and criticise, calumniate and scold, mock and blaspheme, till they have taken the last grain of the good seed out of the heart of those who heard it. Woe to those servants of Satan; the word of Christ applies to them: "He that shall scandalize one of those little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea." —*Matt.* 18: 6.

Part II.

And other some fell upon a rock, and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. . . Now, they upon the rock are they who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no roots; for they believe for a while, and in time of temptation they fall away.

1. Many Catholics hear the word of God every Sunday and holiday; they take pleasure in it, and make good resolutions for the amendment of their life. But as soon as the former temptations assail them, they relapse into the old sinful life: "they believe for a while, but in time of temptation fall away." The priest preaches, for instance, on impurity, on drunkenness, on pride, on avarice, and shows that these vices infallibly lead to eternal damnation; he preaches on enmities, on ill-gotten goods, and proves that these sins, unless they are forsaken and atoned for, draw the punishment of hell after them; he preaches most

eloquently and lucidly on the delay of repentance and the danger of this delay. What happens? Many hearers who feel themselves hit, are seized with a salutary fear; they acknowledge to themselves the sad condition in which they are living, and resolve to turn over a new leaf and begin a new life. But there it stops; it never comes to a real and lasting amendment. They resemble the trees that blossom but never bear fruit, because, the blossoms always fall off too soon, before the fruit is formed.

2. Whence cometh this? *From the bad soil of the heart.* The seed that falls upon stony ground may spring up, but when the heat of the sun comes, it withers away, because it has not the necessary moisture. So it is with many hearers of the word of God. They have a soft heart; they are easily moved and terrified. This natural sensibility of heart is often increased still more by the sinful life which they have been leading; for some sins have the effect of softening one's nature. People weep for anger and grief; the intoxicated and impure weep very easily. Now, if such sinners, at the hearing of the word of God, are moved interiorly, groan, weep, and promise amendment, this is only an effect of the sensibility of their heart, but not absolutely a true spirit of repentance, such as St. Peter and St. Magdalen had when they bewailed their sins. These mere emotions of nature usually vanish again as soon as the causes cease that called them forth. The worst feature is, that such sinners, imagining that their merely natural emotion and tears are signs of true repentance, persevere in their sad condition and expose themselves to the greatest danger of dying penitent only in appearance, and so they will be lost eternally. Therefore, be not deceived; the most pious sentiments, the hottest tears, and the best resolutions can not save the sinner from perdition, unless he truly change his life, and make a radical amendment.

PART III.

Other some fell among thorns, and the thorns growing up with it choked it . . . And that which fell among thorns are they who have heard, and, going their way, are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit.

1. The seed, falling among thorns, springs up, grows for some time, and promises a good yield, but the thorns grow faster than the tender blade, dislodge and finally choke it altogether. So it is with many Christians; they have a good and susceptible heart for religion and virtue; when hearing the word of God they frequently make the best resolutions, they really put their hand to the plough, and labor for the salvation of their soul, they lead

a retired life, pray much, frequently go to confession and communion, do good works, and justify the hope of attaining a high degree of Christian perfection. I shall here only remind you of what you must yourselves have more than once observed—the zeal with which some persons enter on a holy life during a mission or a jubilee, or on a sick-bed. But the thorns, the *fatal* thorns, choke the hopeful seed.

2. And what kind of thorns are these? They are worldly cares, the distractions of business, the enjoyments and pleasures of life. Many, after having sincerely begun the work of amendment, allow themselves to be overwhelmed again by worldly cares. Then they forget God for the sake of their business, and, impelled by their own wicked concupiscence, and intimidated by the bad example of the world, return again to sin, and the last state of such persons is worse than the first. Those parents had resolved never again to appropriate to themselves in their business an unjust cent, but their awakening avarice and their inordinate love for their children make them act contrary to their resolutions and again violate the law of justice in many ways. That man promised he would curse and blaspheme no more, but how long did he keep his promise? As long as his hateful passion did not excite him. But as soon as something excites his anger, he curses and blasphemes as before. Those young people earnestly resolved to give up their sinful familiarity and to live chastely. But, behold, as soon as the old confederate in sin approaches, the old sinful lust is inflamed in their hearts, and they relapse into the former life of sin.

In fine, very many have a kind of wish to be converted, but they are not in real earnest; they lack the courage and resoluteness to break with the sinful world, to control their bad passions, and to walk perseveringly on the apparently rough way of penance. They resemble those solidiers who, as has so often occurred in history, make a sudden detour in order to storm and carry at the first assault a comparatively weak fortress, but who, as soon as the guns of the besieged begin to thunder from the parapets, turn cowards, fall back in dismay, and declare that the fort is impregnable.

PERORATION.

St. Anthony of Padua preached once in the presence of a great multitude, among which were many hundred public sinners. They took the sermon so much to heart and the power of his eloquence was so great, that nothing was heard on every side but weeping, sighing, and moaning, so that the Saint was frequently obliged

to stop in the midst of his discourse. Some cried out: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Others struck their breasts, exclaiming: "Woe to me, I have deserved hell." Others, with uplifted hands, vowed amendment: "No more, O Jesus, no more will I sin." And many were converted, and from that moment to their dying hour led a penitential life. Those were Catholics with whom the word of God did not fall by the wayside, nor upon a rock, nor among thorns, but upon good ground; for "they heard the word of God, and kept it in a good and perfect heart, and brought forth fruit in patience." "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only" (*James* 1: 22), and strive to practice what you hear. Quit your bad habits, subdue your passions and sinful desires, repair all injury done, practice the virtues of your station in life, and persevere in grace to the end. If you do this, you will be of the number of those concerning whom Christ says: "Blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it."—*Luke* 11: 28. Amen.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

THE READING OF THE BIBLE.

The seed is the word of God.—Luke 8: 11.

The word of God, which Jesus in the gospel for this day compares with seed is principally contained in the Sacred Scripture —the Old and New Testaments. This has been the constant belief of the Church. St. Paul already assures us that all Scripture is inspired of God. *II. Tim.* 3: 16. And St. Peter says: "Prophecy came not by the will of man at any time; but the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Ghost."—*II. Pet.* 1: 21. The Fathers of the Church teach the same. St. Clement of Rome calls the Sacred Scriptures enunciations of the Holy Ghost, which contain nothing bad or false. Justin the Martyr calls the authors of the Sacred Scripture men who speak in the Holy Ghost; and Clement of Alexandria says that the mouth of the Lord and the Holy Ghost have spoken everything which the Sacred Scripture contains.

The Bible is therefore a book to be greatly venerated, for it was written by a special illumination and inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and contains nothing but the pure, infallible word of God. But this word of God shares the fate of the sown seed, with which it is compared by Jesus. Many read the Bible, but the word contained in it falls upon bad ground, and, therefore, remains without fruit. I shall speak to-day on the reading of the Bible, and propose and answer the following three questions:

I. Are we allowed to read the Bible?
II. Ought we to read the Bible?
III. How should we read the Bible?

PART I.

1. *Are we allowed to read the Bible?* No reason can be assigned why any one, even of the common people, should be absolutely forbidden to read it. The Apostles and Evangelists did not write the New Testament for a few individuals or only for the learned, but for entire congregations and for Christians in every station of life. The gospels and epistles of the Apostles were read publicly during the divine offices and the Apostles gave to the bishop and priests the command to read their letters or epistles to the assembled congregations. As the Sacred Scripture contains nothing but what is orally preached, I can see no reason why the reading of the book should be forbidden.

The most learned and pious men most earnestly recommend the reading of the Sacred Scripture, as well as meditation thereon. St. Chrysostom says: "Let us devote ourselves diligently to the reading of the Sacred Scriptures; for he who reads the divine truths with all diligence and the holiest desire, certainly can not be abandoned." St. Bernard says: "Those who are accustomed to hear God often and willingly in the Sacred Scripture, seem, if not exteriorly, at least interiorly, to carry the sign of election for eternal life." St. Ambrose remarks: "The Sacred Scripture is a rich pasture, the daily reading of it nourishes, exhilarates, and strengthens us, if we taste, and, as it were, masticate over again what we have read."

2. *In the reading of this book, however, we must observe the rules laid down by the Church.*

In course of time the reading of the Bible was greatly abused; wherefore the Church saw herself compelled to lay down certain rules, that the bread of life might not cause the death of her children. In the middle ages heretics abused the Bible, es-

pecially the Albigenses, who tried to prove their errors by it, namely, that there are two Gods, a good and a bad one, that the baptism of the Church avails nothing, that matrimony is sinful. This induced the Council of Toulouse, in the year 1229, to forbid lay people to read the books of the Old and New Testaments in the vernacular. The Council of Oxford ordained under penalty of excommunication, that no translation of the Bible should be put into circulation unless it was approved by the bishop. At the time of the so-called Reformation the Church had still more reason to forbid the general reading of the Bible in the vernacular, because the false teachers had been guilty of a great deal of dishonesty in the translation of it.

3. Now-a-days every one is allowed to read it in the vernacular, provided the translation, according to the rescript of Pope Benedict XIV., be approved by the Church and accompanied by explanatory annotations from the Fathers of the Church. Consequently, the bare text, without note or comment, is forbidden. It would be well for those who wish to read the Bible, even when accompanied with annotations and the *imprimatur* of the bishop, to ask the advice of their pastor or confessor and to act according to his direction, for he can best judge what portions of the sacred book would be adapted to them, or whether the reading of it at all would be profitable to them or not. I may here remark that those who do not read the Bible at all suffer by no means the loss of the word of God on that account, because they hear the pure word of God every Sunday in sermons, and find it in their catechisms and other spiritual books of devotion, and especially in the History of the Old and the New Testaments, containing the principal points and events of the Bible.

PART II.

The innovators in the sixteenth century asserted *that all men without exception must read the Bible.* The Church rejects this assertion, and with justice, for—

1. *The reading of the Bible is not necessary for salvation.*

(*a.*) Reason alone convinces us of this. The Sacred Scripture of the Old Testament was, as is known to all, composed by Moses and other pious men. The world therefore had already existed for about two thousand five hundred years, during all of which time there was no Sacred Scripture. In like manner the Apostles and Evangelists wrote the Sacred Scripture of the New Testament many years after the death of Christ, when the Christian religion was already propagated in many countries, and num-

bered millions of adherents. Now, here is the stubborn query: How did matters stand with all those people who lived and died before the Sacred Scriptures were written, if the reading thereof was necessary for salvation? They could not have been saved. Thousands upon thousands even now would share the same fate, for it is an incontrovertible fact that thousands of Christians never in their life read one page of the Bible, and many more do not even know how to read. Who will be so foolish as to assert that all these Christians, because they omit to read the Bible, will be lost?

(*b.*) If the reading of the Bible were necessary, we should have an explicit command to that effect. But such a command was never given either in the Old or in the New Testament. Christ commanded the Jews, not to read the Bible, but to hear the teachers who sit on the chair of Moses.—*Matt.* 23: 2, 3. In like manner he commanded his Apostles to *teach* all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded. The Fathers of the Church in general recommend the reading of the Bible, but never once do they say that such reading is of obligation. St. Augustine says: "A man who bases himself on faith, hope, and charity and immovably holds to it, does not need the Scripture, except for the instruction of others." Irenæus and Tertullian write in the same sense.

(*c.*) Our adversaries endeavor to prove by various specious reasons that every one is bound to read the Bible. They say: Since Christ said to the Pharisees: "Search the Scriptures" (*John* 5: 39.), he inculcated and enforced the reading of the Bible on all. Christ did indeed say to the Pharisees: "Search the Scriptures." But it was said to them only. It was said by way of reproach to the Scribes and the Pharisees, who, reading the Scriptures as they did, and boasting of their knowledge of them, thought to find life everlasting in them, and yet they would not receive him of whom all those Scriptures gave testimony, and through whom alone they could attain true life. Besides, it fell to their particular province to read the Scriptures and to know them, just as it does to Catholic priests, and if they had diligently read the books of the Old Testament, especially of the prophets, they would have found out that he was the promised Messias, and that he spoke the truth. Again, St. Paul commanded the Christians at Colossa to read the letter which he had written to the Christians of Laodicea.—*Col.* 4: 17. Our Protestant friends here rub their hands in glee and jump to the conclusion that the Apostle obliges all men to read the Bible. But can they not see that this command does not concern all believers in general, but only the presiding elders of that particular church? They were

accustomed in those primitive times not only to read the Apostolic letters to the assembled congregation, but also to explain them. The Sacred Scriptures of the New Testament consisted then of these fragmentary writings scattered among the different churches. And they did exactly what we priests are now doing every Sunday and holiday when we read fragments or extracts from the epistles of the Apostles and from the four gospels of the Evangelists, and then explain them in accordance with the Fathers and the teaching of the Church.

2. *The reading of a Bible is not a universal means of virtue.* He who reads the Bible finds in it in reality no more than what he has already heard in oral instructions. If he meet obscure passages he explains them according to the already received instruction, or he asks his pastor or some other well-instructed person for an explanation of them; or omitting to do this, he passes on, and thus does not come at all to the understanding of the obscure passage. In all these cases it is better for the ordinary man to make use of oral instruction in matters of religion, than to read the Bible, in which many things must remain unintelligible and obscure to him. That most people become no better by Bible reading history abundantly proves. The innovators in the sixteenth century recommended nothing more urgently than reading the Bible. What was the consequence? The unity of faith, as well as Christian humility and obedience, were lost, and people became daily worse. It came to pass that the most ignorant people, with the Bible in their hands, would regard neither temporal nor spiritual authority, and insisted on living according to the desires of their own hearts. The Protestant Bible Societies distribute annually an immense number of bibles among heathen nations, but scarcely one Pagan is ever converted to Christianity thereby.

3. The unlimited reading of the Bible opens the door to many evils. History proves that the universal and indiscriminate reading of it has been the occasion of many aberrations and the most horrible abominations. Examples of this are found in the daily newspapers. Witness: Freeman in Maine, the Oneida community in New York, and that other abominable sect in Utah Territory.

PART III.

1. The Sacred Scriptures must be read with *profound reverence*. The Bible is not a common book, it was not composed by the powers of the human mind; it is holy and divine, for the whole is inspired by God, and is therefore the word of God in the

strictest sense. We must consequently, as St. Chrysostom says, approach the reading of the Bible as if we were entering heaven, for the reading of it is a peep, as it were, into heaven, the mouth of the prophets being God's mouth. If we have reverence even for the writing of a temporal king, how much more reverence do we not owe to the Bible, which has God himself, the King of heaven and earth, for its author.

2. *With childlike humility and simplicity.* We may say the same of the reading of the word of God as of hearing it. The Scribes and Pharisees frequently heard the word of God, which Jesus preached, but it profited them nothing, because pride blinded them. Only the humble disciples comprehended the meaning of the divine word by degrees and arrived at the truth. Therefore Jesus said to them: "To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to the rest in parables, that seeing they may not see, and hearing may not understand." *Luke* 8: 10. We must not interpret and explain obscure and difficult passages according to our own private judgment, but we must humble ourselves, acknowledge our ignorance, pray to God for light, and ask advice of our pastors.

3. *With a heart solicitous for salvation.* He who reads this divine Book only for the gratification of his curiosity, or from a motive of pride, in order to shine before others by his knowledge of the Bible, derives no benefit from his reading, even if he peruses the whole of the Bible. You must read it to become better instructed in the truths of our holy religion and its doctrines and precepts, and thus be the better enabled to perfect and sanctify your life. You must read therefore not cursorily, but carefully, stop frequently in your reading, take to heart the one or the other passage which suits your case, ponder on it, apply it to yourselves, and make good resolutions. A beautiful example as to how we are to read the Bible is found in the treasurer of Candace, the Queen of the Ethiopians.—*Acts* 8: 26-40.

PERORATION.

Although you are not *obliged* to read the Bible, yet you *may* read it, provided the translation is approved of, and accompanied by the usual annotations from the Fathers of the Church. If you be able to read the original, so much the better. Read it then with reverence, and when you come across certain difficult passages, hard to be understood, ask your pastor for an explanation of them, and resolve to make the holy lessons contained therein the rule of your life, that the word of the Psalmist may be

fulfilled in you: "Blessed is the man who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the chair of pestilence. But his will is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he shall meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree that is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season. And his leaf shall not fall off; and all, whatsoever he shall do, shall prosper."—*Ps.* 1: 1-4. Amen.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

THE CEREMONIES AT THE PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD.

The seed is the word of God.—Luke 8: 11.

The sower in the parable of our gospel for this day, who went out to sow his seed, is the priest and pastor of souls. The priests of the Catholic Church strew the seed of the divine word every Sunday and holiday, and wish nothing more ardently than that this seed should spring up in the hearts of men and bring forth the fruit of Christian justice. The public discourses which they deliver are, in truth, the word of God, for they preach nothing but what God has revealed in the Old Law, through the patriarchs and prophets, and in the New Law, through his only begotten Son and the Apostles. As the word of God is a constituent part of divine worship, the Church has ordained in the delivery of it, as well as in all other functions pertaining to Divine worship, certain ceremonies which shall form the subject of our meditation to-day; namely, those which—

I. Precede the preaching of the word of God;
II. Accompany it;
III. And follow it.

PART I.

1. The Church has prescribed a sacred attire to be worn by those who preach the word of God, *i. e.*, a surplice or alb and

a stole. Preaching is a duty assigned to the priesthood, and only priests are allowed to perform it. They announce and explain the word of God; they speak officially and appear as the representatives of Jesus Christ, preaching by his commission and in his name. They can say with the Apostle: "For Christ therefore we are ambassadors, God, as it were, exhorting by us."—*II. Cor.* 5: 20. To the preachers of the word of God the word of Jesus applies: "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me."—*Luke* 10: 16.

The *color of the stole* accomodates itself always to the feast, and it is thereby intimated that the sermon helongs to the feast; those err, then, who imagine that the sermon on Sundays and holidays is something unessential and superfluous.

2. The place where the sermon is preached is the *pulpit.* It was customary from the beginning to deliver the Christian discourses from an elevated place. Standing, like the true sentinels they are, on the high battlements of the Church, and casting, as the beautiful etymology of the word "episcopus" indicates, a watchful and solicitous gaze over the flock that is peacefully grazing in the pastures of divine grace beneath them, the Catholic bishops in their episcopal robes present a magnificent sight. St. Augustine says: "The bishops have an elevated seat, that they may look over all the people and watch them. From that place they are your teachers." The place from which the sermon was delivered was called in the beginning *cathedra,* or *throne.* Bishops and priests frequently mounted an *ambo, i. e.,* reading-desk, when they preached; it stood at the entrance to the sanctuary, and two or three steps led to it. Our present pulpits are not of very ancient date, having originated in the thirteenth century. The elevation of the pulpit is for a particular purpose namely, that the preacher may look over the assembled faithful and be more easily heard by them; but it has also a symbolical signification, indicating the dignity of the preacher as an ambassador of God, urging us, as Christians, to seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God.—*Col.* 3: 1.

3. The preaching of the word of God begins with a prayer. So it was in the most ancient times. Before the bishops and priests commenced to preach, they signed themselves with the sign of the cross, a custom which even the Christian emperors observed when they delivered a public speech. After that they saluted the people with the words, "Peace be with you;" and they answered, "And with thy spirit."

Now-a-days a short hymn in sometimes sung by the choir, in which the Holy Ghost is invoked for the worthy and effectual delivery of the word of God. If the sermon is to produce fruit, both the preacher and the people need the grace of the Holy Ghost; the preacher, that he may receive light, strength, and unction from above, that he may preach they word of God convincingly and penetratingly; the people, that they may receive what is said, make earnest resolutions, and live accordingly.

4. After the hymn, the preacher signs himself with the sign of the cross and recites an "Our Father" and "Hail Mary" alternately with the people. The sign of the cross is made on this occasion and at the reading of the gospel, because all our actions should begin in the name of the Most Holy Trinity, and because we can hope for blessing and fruit only through the merits of Jesus Christ crucified. Our Lord says in the gospel for this day that some seed fell by the wayside, and, in explaining it, adds that they are those who hear the word of God; then the devil comes and takes the word out of their heart, lest, believing, they should be saved. The devil endeavors to hinder the fruit of the divine word; that he may not be able to do this we sign ourselves with the sign of the cross, which has the sacramental power of keeping away diabolical influences and temptations, or of rendering them ineffectual. The "Our Father," which is said, is in its proper place, for it is the best prayer, and the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread," refers especially to the word of God, which Jesus compares to bread. We justly also say the "Hail Mary," for Mary, the Mother of God, is the Mother of grace, and it is said of her, "that she kept all these words of Jesus, pondering them in her heart."—*Luke* 2: 19.

5. After the prayer the priest reads the epistle and gospel for the Sunday or holiday. Collections of epistles and gospels date back to the earliest times. In proof of this may be mentioned the collection which Pope Damascus ordered St. Jerome to make, dating back at least to the 5th century. It certains very nearly the same epistles and gospels with we now have in the Missal and Book of Epistles and Gospels.

The preacher then announces his text (generally a passage from Holy Writ), makes the sign of the cross, saying in a lond voice: "In the name of the Father", etc. and commences his Sermon.

PART II.

At the preaching of the word of God there are but few ceremonies and I shall mention only two of them.

1. In the first Christian ages the bishops and priests were seated whilst preaching; they stood only occasionally. In Italy and in the East the people used to remain seated, but in France and Africa they were accustomed to stand; only the infirm and weak were allowed to sit. Now-a-days the word of God is everywhere preached in a standing posture, but the people sit down.

Both positions have meanings attached to them. Jesus taught standing and sitting. If the priest preaches standing or sitting, he imitates the example of Jesus. Sitting, as was formerly customary, signifies that the preacher is a teacher; for teachers during the hours of instruction generally sit down. The standing posture, which is prescribed in our days, indicates the priest as the ambassador of God, for ambassadors generally deliver the messages of their princes in a standing posture.

That the people hear the word of God either standing or sitting, has also both its historical and symbolical reason; an historical, because the hearers of Jesus sometimes stood and sometimes sat down; a symbolical, because the standing posture indicates the reverence for the word of God; the sitting posture, the interior quiet and recollection with which we should hear the word of God, like Mary Magdalen, who was sitting at the feet of Jesus when he spoke to her. Some Christians do as the disciples on Mount Olivet did—they sleep during the sermon! This is wrong, for it is an offense against the reverence due to the word of God, and renders it useless.

2. *In early times no one was permitted to leave the church during the sermon.* In many churches the doors were locked; in others, deacons or ostiarii stood at the entrances, so that no one could go in or out without good reason. In Africa those who without any reason left the church during the sermon were excommunicated. It is true, now-a-days, that Christians who without a good reason leave the church during the sermon are not excommunicated, but they sin in several ways, because they refuse due reverence to the word of God, they deprive themselves of that which is frequently very necessary for their instruction and amendment, they disturb people, and give scandal and bad example.

There are various pretexts put forward by some as an excuse for going out during the sermon, or staying away altogether. They say:

(*a.*) *The sermon lasts too long.* How long does it last? Generally only half an hour, rarely over it, and never over an hour. And is that too long? If it were an opera, a comedy, a ball, would half an hour or an hour be too long?

(*b.*) *It is laborious to hear a sermon.* Are not corporal and spiritual works laborious? Is it not a sign of forgetfulness of salvation and of tepidity to be afraid of the little difficulties incident to the hearing of the word of God, and, on that account, to neglect it?

(*c.*) *The sermons are too tedious, it is hardly possible to wait for the end of them.* You must bear in mind that the preacher does not speak to you in order to entertain you agreeably like an actor, but to instruct and amend you. And every sermon attains this object, if you hear it with a well prepared heart. If one is abroad or in a place of banishment, and a letter or verbal news is brought to one about one's parents, brothers, sisters, friends, one cares very little whether the letter is beautifully written and worded, or whether the news be communicated to one in flowery language; no, the shorter and more succinct the news, the more readily and joyfully one hears and receives it. The same is the case with the news from the heavenly country, about God, his providence, his love and goodness, his promises and commandments; the manner is nothing, it is the matter, the thing itself, which we should have at heart.

PART III.

The sermon is followed by notices and prayers.

Even in primitive times feasts and fasts, and other matters, were announced to the assembled congregation after the sermon. This was so much the more necessary during the time of persecution, as such announcements could not be made in any other way. In our day the ordinary custom is to announce all the services for the ensuing week, the names of the dead, communications from the bishop, collections, jubilees, missions, indulgences, etc. The bans of marriage have to be published if there are any persons to be married. This publication of the bans of marriage on Sundays and holidays is a strict ordinance of the Church, and can only be omitted by dispensation from the bishop. Purely temporal things should not be mentioned.

In the primitive ages of the Church the names of the departed were read out at the memento after the elevation and commended to the prayers of the faithful. A reminiscence of this ancient custom is still retained in the reading of the names of the departed in order that we may remember our faithful fellow-Christians in our prayers.

After the notices come *several prayers,* first for the *dead.* Prayers for the dead are properly said after the sermon, for the sermon directs our thoughts to eternity, and calls upon us to

pray for our departed brothers and sisters. The memory of the dead brings home to us the serious truth that we also must die and appear before the judgment-seat of God, a truth which is well calculated to encourage us to follow the lessons heard in the sermon.

After the prayers for the dead come prayers for the living. First the acts of the three theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity, with the act of contrition and purpose of amendment. As faith, hope, and charity, to which contrition and a purpose of amendment belong, are the three principal virtues, on the exercise of which the whole Christian life depends, it is proper that acts of these fundamental virtues be elicited by the faithful after the sermon. Pope Benedict XIV. ordained in the year 1742, that on every Sunday after mass they should be read to the faithful, in order that they might become accustomed to them and frequently elicit them. And to excite us to a more frequent exercise of these acts, he granted, in addition to the indulgences already annexed, two Plenary ones, viz.—

(*a.*) A Plenary Indulgence once a month to all those who shall devoutly recite the acts of faith, hope, and charity every day for that space of time.

(*b.*) A Plenary Indulgence at the point of death, if these acts are made devoutly in the heart, or merely breathed with the lips. Benedict XIV., in the decree relating thereto, declares that no particular set form of words or expressions is necessary, but that any one may use whatever form he pleases, provided it express distinctly the particular motive of each one of the three theological virtues.

After the acts other prayers are frequently recited before the priest leaves the altar, for instance, in seasons of widespread affliction or calamity. Thus we pray now for our Holy Father the Pope, for peace and unity, and for the protection of the Church, now so grievously oppressed and persecuted.

PERORATION.

My advice to you is: Listen attentively to the word of God. Do not increase the number of those lukewarm, careless Catholics, who scarcely ever hear an instruction; make it your rule, if possible, to hear the word of God every Sunday and holiday. But hear it as becomes good Catholics, with attention and reverence, and with the firm purpose of regulating your life according to its teaching. During the week think frequently of what you have heard in the sermon, renew your resolution, and pray to God that he may give you the grace to put it into practice. Look

upon the word of God as one of the greatest graces of heaven, listen to it willingly, and practice it, that it may be for you what it can and should be, the means of obtaining life everlasting. Amen.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

THE THORNS A SYMBOL OF THE RICHES AND PLEASURES OF THIS LIFE.

That which fell among thorns are they who have heard, and, going their way, are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit.—Luke 8: 14.

Remarkable is the explanation which our Lord gives in the gospel for this day of the riches and the pleasures of this life. He compares them to thorns which choke the seed, so that it yields no fruit. St. Gregory the Great says of this passage: "How could our Lord call the riches and pleasures of this life thorns? Thorns cause smarting wounds, whilst the riches and pleasures of this life are pleasant. We shun thorns, whilst every one wishes to possess riches and to enjoy the pleasures of life." The comparison, indeed, seems at first sight scarcely appropriate, but if we look closer we shall find it very significant. Thorns really are, as we shall see to-day, a symbol of the riches and pleasures of this life, in so far as they—

I. Cause painful wounds;
II. Often harbour noxious insects;
III. Draw to themselves and hold fast everything that comes near them.

PART I.

That thorns cause painful wounds when one comes in contact with them, is known to all. In this respect they resemble riches and pleasures; for both inflict wounds and cause pain:

1. *If we try to possess and enjoy them.*

(*a.*) *Riches.* Example: *Achab.* How angry and fretful did not this king become when Naboth would not exchange or sell him his vineyard! And casting himself upon his bed, he turned away his face to the wall, and would not eat.—*III. Kings* 21: 2-4. Like this king are all those who have an inordinate desire for riches and temporal goods. How disquieted they are lest they should not obtain what they hanker after. And what vexation, fretfulness and ill-temper do they display when they see their hopes frustrated!

(*b.*) *Pleasures of life.* Example: Amnon, a son of David. He became sick and emaciated because he sinfully loved Thamar, his half-sister, and she resisted his criminal desire.—*II. Kings* 13: 1-4. Impure love still turns the head and heart of people, frequently banishes all cheerfulness, and leads to weariness of life and suicide. Behold the painful thorns!

2. *If we possess and enjoy them.*

(*a.*) *Riches.* Example: The parable of the rich man, who, full of disquietude on account of his rich harvest, said within himself: "What shall I do, because I have not where to lay up my fruits." —*Luke* 12-16, 17. So the rich. Their goods cause them a great deal of trouble. The thought how to invest their money most securely and advantageously, how to guard it against thieves, rests like an incubus on their heart, causes them many sad hours, and deprives them of sound, refreshing sleep. Behold again the painful thorns!

(*b.*) *Pleasures of life.* Example: Amnon. After he had overpowered and ravished her, "he hated her with an exceeding great hatred, so that the hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her before."—*II. Kings* 13: 15. St. Bernard says: "If a man yield to ambition, he sins, but he sins only like an angel; if he succumb to avarice, he sins, but he sins only like a man; if he yield to the impure lusts of the flesh, he sins, but he sins like a beast." What self-degradation, what prostitution of the dignity of man! The lustful feel this; they blush for themselves when they have accomplished the shameful deed, and their conscience cries out to them: You are an abominable, miserable wretch! Behold again the painful thorns!

3. *If we lose them we must separate ourselves from them.*

(a.) *Riches.* It is very painful to have a tooth drawn, because it has its roots deeply set in the jaw, and is firmly attached to the

gum. Some persons cling to their goods with all their soul, therefore they experience great tribulation and anguish when these goods are diminished, or when they must separate themselves from them. It is painful to them to have to spend money even for the support of their family. How grudgingly they give anything to the Church or for charitable purposes! What a calamity, what a blow, when their temporal goods are wholly or partly lost! How often do we read of suicides resulting from such loss! And when death, the inevitable, comes and lays his icy hand on these avaricious persons to tear them from their possessions, from those vain gods they made to themselves, what a torture is theirs! Behold the painful thorns!

(*b.*) *Pleasures of life.* Parable of the prodigal son. Whither did his debaucheries bring him? Into the deepest poverty and shame. We see the unfortunate young man hiring himself to feed the swine of a stranger, and reduced to such intolerable hunger as to desire to be fed with the husks which were thrown to the hogs. But even such food he was unable to procure.—*Luke* 15: 15, *etc.* All who give themselves to impurity share this fate more or less: they are overtaken by poverty and need, shame and disgrace. "He that joineth himself to harlots will be wicked; rottenness and worms shall inherit him, and he shall be lifted up for a greater example, and his name shall be taken away out of the number" (of the living).—*Ecclus.* 19: 3. Behold the painful thorns!

PART II.

Thorns harbour noxious insects. So riches and lusts nurture much evil and are the hot-beds of sin and vice every description.

(*a.*) *Riches.* The Apostle says: "They that will become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition, for the desire of money is the root of all evils."—*I. Tim.* 6: 9. Does not avarice entice to lying and cheating, perjury, and every kind of injustice, even to robbery and murder? Again, is it not avarice that makes the heart adamantine towards the poor and needy; is it not avarice that makes so many men forget God, neglect the duties of religion, desecrate the Sundays and holidays, and lose all sense and feeling for higher and nobler things? Example: Judas. Whither did his insatiable avarice bring him? What a miserable end he made! St. Basil is right in saying, "Avarice fills the woods with robbers, houses with thieves, families with discontent, the shops with cheats, the halls of justice with perjuries, the hut of innocence with misery and

poverty, the eyes of the orphan with tears, the heart of the widow with sighs, the prisons with criminals, and hell with damned souls."

(*b.*) *Pleasures of life.* Impurity leads to the violation of all the commandments of God, to unbelief and heresy, to presumption or despair, to false oaths, to the desecration of Sundays and holidays, to sins against parents and children, to disunion, quarrels, fighting, murder, infidelities, thefts, false promises, and to a vast multitude of sinful thoughts and desires. To what base devices did Henry VIII. of England stoop, to gratify his lewd desire for Anna Boleyn, one of his virtuous Queen's maids. He perjured himself, and thousands of others he bribed or forced to perjure themselves in order to obtain a dissolution of his marriage with Queen Catherine. But she was his lawful wife, and the Pope could not annul the marriage. Then Henry renounced allegiance to the Pope, proclaimed himself head of the English Church, repudiated Catherine, took Anne to wife, and subsequently murdered her judicially in order to be free to take a new wife to suit his fancy. Nor was this the end of it. He sacrificed to his filthy lust two queens (two others were dismissed by him), two cardinals, twenty-one bishops, twelve abbots, five hundred priests, more than a hundred canons of cathedral churches and doctors of divinity, forty-two dukes and other high dignitaries of the state, three hundred of the lower nobility, one hundred and ten ladies, and a great number of citizens; all of whom he executed because they disapproved of his debaucheries and schism, which was a consequence of his adulterous life. Into what an abyss of crimes and vices did voluptuousness plunge this ruler!

Part III.

Thorns catch and hold fast whatever comes near them. We frequently notice on thorn-bushes wisps of hay, the wool of sheep, leaves of trees, etc.; even insects are impaled on the thorns. Riches and lust do something of the same kind.

(*a.*) *Riches.* Do you not frequently see how the avaricious, when buying or selling, endeavor by every trick to make the largest profit, never scrupling, but only too glad to be able in this way to rob a poor fellow-creature of his hard-earned money? Do you not see how they sell things at exorbitant prices to people who must have the article, or, on the other hand, squeeze out of a seller for a mere song something that he may be obliged to part with in order to raise some ready money? Have

you not seen the like of these pounce down on their debtors if they can not meet their payments to the day, thus putting them to unnecessary expense? Yes; you have no doubt seen such hard-hearted persons take advantage of a poor man's temporary inability, in order to get possession of his house for half its worth, driving him forth homeless. The Emperor Commodus was as avaricious as he was cruel. He caused a great many of the rich to be executed with a view to confiscate their property. At the same time he did not despise the smallest profit. On his birthday every senator was obliged to make him a present of two gold pieces for himself, also for his wife and each of his children. Once he pretended to go to Africa, and under this pretext made the state treasurer hand him over a large sum of money; but he never went. When in the year 192 he was again about to have many rich people executed, a deadly drink was administered to him, and this not being effective he was murdered. The senate and the people wished to have his carcass dragged with the gladiators' hooks into the Tiber.

(*b.*) *Pleasures of life.* Do they not attract everything? If they will only look into their conscience and own the truth must not many say: "In voluptuousness I lost my innocence, the peace of my heart, my honor, my health, my temporal goods, and my happiness of life?" Must not many parents complain: "The pleasures of this life have robbed us of the hearts of our children, made them our adversaries, and destroyed all our consolation and joy?" Must not many families sigh: "Voluptuousness has destroyed our whole welfare?" In the year 310 the Emperor Galerius was afflicted with an abominable disease, caused by impurity, which defied the art of all physicians. Every remedy that was tried only increased the evil. The upper part of the body withered away, as it were, whilst the legs were so swollen that they looked like large pillars. The stench from his ulcers filled the palace, and the vermin that ate him up alive made him an object of pity and horror. He died in despair.

PERORATION.

You now understand why our Lord compares the riches and pleasures of his life to thorns. Thorns cause painful wounds; riches and voluptuousness do the same; they wound all who desire them inordinately, possess them wrongfully, or enjoy them sinfully. Thorns harbor noxious insects; riches and voluptuousness are the hot-beds of sin and vice. Thorns attract everything that comes within their reach, and hold it fast; so on the prickly bush of riches and voluptuousness remain hanging the sweat of

the poor, virtue and innocence. O Jesus, grant us the grace so to pass through that which is temporal that we may not lose that which is eternal! Amen.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

6. MORAL SKETCH.

WHY THE WORD OF GOD WITH MANY CHRISTIANS YIELDS NO FRUIT.

The sower went out to sow his seed.—Luke 8: 5.

We pastors of souls resemble the sower in the gospel, who was anything but fortunate in his sowing, for three parts of his seed fell upon bad ground, and yielded no fruit. A great many sermons are preached now-a-days; in every church on Sundays and holidays and often on week-days. Priests devote much time and labor to the preparation of their sermons; they strain their nerves and break their hearts in preaching to those committed to their charge, and what is the result? scarcely any; the world goes its own way still; the people, instead of coming nearer to God, separate themselves yet further from him, and sink deeper and deeper into sin.

Whence this deplorable fact? I could give a good many reasons and in particular refer you to the parable in the gospel of to-day in which it is explained why the seed of the word of God remains unfruitful; but I shall confine myself to two reasons and say: The word of God yields no fruit with many persons—

I. Because they bring to church what they should leave at home;
II. Because they leave in the church what they should take home.

PART I.

Many persons bring to church what they should leave at home.

1. *Disregard of the word of God.* Many despise the word of God, which we priests preach by the commission of Christ. Their whole sanctification of the Sunday consists in assisting at a low mass. Can you say that these Catholics keep the commandment

of God: "Thou shalt keep holy the Sabbath day?" Others indeed, hear the word of God sometimes, but how do they hear it? Without reverence. To them what the priest preaches is not the word of God, but the word of man. If he has any faults or defects they criticise him and speak ill of him. But are human frailties in the priest impediments to his preaching the word of God? Is wine not wine, whether you drink it out of golden or wooden vessels? If the priests speaks plainly about certain sins and vices, and some feel hit, they become indignant and say: "That is not the word of God, it is nonsense!" Is what the priest denounces as sin and vice not branded in the gospel as such? Does he command or forbid anything Christ has not commanded or forbidden? If you wish the word of God to produce fruit in you, it behoves you above all things to leave the disregard thereof at home and hear it with reverence and humility.

2. *Worldly-mindedness.* Wherein does this consist! I shall illustrate it by examples. If you are always thinking only of the goods of this world and thereby forget God and the salvation of your soul, there is worldly-mindedness in your heart. If you desire only to lead a life of pleasure, if in every tribulation you lose your patience, if you abhor mortification, you are worldly-minded. If you are intent upon the increase of your substance, upon honor and influence, and disregard God and your conscience, worldliness rules in you. If you neglect your religious duties, find no pleasure in devotional exercises, seldom make use of the means of grace, go to confession and communion only rarely and more from compulsion than from a free impulse, worldly-mindedness has entered your heart. If you do no violence to yourself in striving to control your passions, to live humbly, chastely, and meekly, to observe God's commandments, you are worldly-minded. In a word, if you think, speak or act according to the maxims of the world and never gauge your acts by the precepts of the gospel, if you disdain devotional practices as the Israelities did the manna, you are worldly-minded.

That those who are governed by worldly-mindedness draw no benefit from the word of God is evident they are not susceptible of it. If the priest in the pulpit speaks of temporal things and shows how one can in a short time acquire honor and riches, or lead a pleasant life, they would listen to him with the greatest interest; but if he speaks of the vanity of all earthly things, of penance and conversion, etc., he can put no life into them; they remain cold and uninterested. If he is severe, if he calls down woe upon the world and its devotees they become angry and call him an exaggerator. If sometimes they are aroused and become convinced of the necessity of repentance, they lack the power

of disengaging themselves from their life of sin, they act like Felix to whom St. Paul preached. You must leave worldly-mindedness at home if you wish the word of God to yield fruit.

3. *Impenitence.* Who are impenitent? Those who always live in the state of sin without any earnest desire to be really converted. The impenitent are the unchaste, who carry on sinful familiarities or yield to carnal lust without making any strenuous exertion to amend. Those also must be classed among the impenitent who in their business, trade, or profession render themselves guilty of various acts of injustice, and will not abstain from such and repair the injury done; those who are addicted to drunkenness and gambling, and continue to commit these sins from year to year; those who live at enmity with their neighbor and will not be reconciled. If such impenitent persons hear a sermon, what will it profit them? No more than the obdurate Scribes and Pharisees, to whom Christ preached in vain.

These are three evils which frustrate every salutary effect of the word of God. Reflect and see whether one or the other of these evils has not been the reason why the word of God produced no fruit in you. If such be the case, make now the resolution to remove that which heretofore frustrated the fruitfulness of the word of God.

PART II.

Many leave in the church what they should take to their homes.

1. *The salutary impression which they received at the hearing of the word of God.* Some are convinced of the truth of what is said; they come to the conclusion that if they continue their present mode of life they can not attain their eternal end. The serious truths which are preached make a great impression upon them; with terror they think of the countless sins which lie upon their conscience; the thought of death, judgment and hell, fills them with consternation; they say to themselves, No, I must not go on in this way. I shall be lost for ever. Such impressions are indeed good and salutary; they are a seed, which is already springing up, and which only needs fair weather to grow and yield fruit. But what comes of it? I will give you an example of what I mean: Here is a family; all are occupied with something; the men are working in the shop, the mother and daughters in the house; one is engaged in the kitchen, another doing the bedrooms; others are sewing, the father is making out an account. All at once a band of music strikes up, and, behold, all quit their work, rush to the windows or out of doors, and listen to the

music. They are pleased and enraptured by it. When the music ceases all go back and continue their work. The music and the impressions which it made on the ear are forgotten little by little.

So with many hearers of the word of God. The preacher pours forth the word of God for them, and it is like pouring water into a sieve which retains none of it and in a few minutes is dry again. It must be plain to every one that the word of God can produce no fruit, because the salutary impressions are not preserved. St. James compares such persons to a man who looks at his face in a looking-glass, and, going away, remembers not how he looked.

2. *The good resolutions which they made.* In consequence of the salutary impressions which the word of God makes upon some hearers, they form good resolutions; they will curse and blaspheme no more, they will give up their enmity, they will never get drunk again, no longer sin against purity; they will pray and receive the sacraments more frequently. These resolutions deserve all praise, but they have one defect, and it is a great one—they are never put into practice, because they are left in the church and not taken home. This, then, is the reason why so many hearers of the word of God make no progress in the way of amendment and perfection. They are like a weather-cock, which is moved by every breath of wind, but remains nevertheless in the same place.

One day, as an old lady was returning from a sermon she had heard she was met by a gentleman who asked her if the sermon was already over. "No," replied the lady. "But why do the people leave the church before the sermon is ended?" said the gentleman. "Because the priest left the pulpit," she replied. "What!" said the gentleman, "is not the sermon over when the priest has left the pulpit?" "The preacher," she replied, "has certainly ceased to speak, but the sermon on that account is not ended; on the contrary, it now begins, for the people must take home the sermon they have heard and practice it."—That lady's remark is worthy of our consideration.

PERORATION.

Consider that you have to give an account to God for every sermon preached to you, and for every sermon which you can and ought to hear, since it is a grace which God gives you for your salvation. Take care lest you abuse this grace. Do not bring to church what you should leave at home, namely, disregard of the word of God, worldly-mindedness and impenitence; and do not leave in the church what you should take home with

you, namely, the salutary impressions made on you, the good resolutions that occur to you, in order that the seed of the word of God may fall in your case upon good ground, and yield fruits for eternal life. Amen.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

7. MORAL SKETCH.

WHAT WE MUST DO SO THAT THE WORD OF GOD WHICH IS PREACHED TO US MAY PRODUCE FRUIT.

The seed is the word of God.—Luke 8: 11.

The parable in this day's gospel needs no explanation, since Jesus Christ has vouchsafed to explain it, and all you have to do to understand it is to read it attentively. But, as your pastor, it is my duty to see that you not only rightly understand the parable, but that as far as in me lies you are induced to put its teaching into practice. Knowledge does not suffice; you must practice what you know; and therefore I shall briefly explain what you must do in order that the word of God may profit you—

I. Before the sermon;
II. During the sermon;
III. After the sermon.

PART I.

If the word of God is to profit you, you must—

1. *Prepare yourself beforehand for it.* What does the farmer do when the seed-time comes round? He clears the field of stubble and stones, etc., he ploughs and harrows it. That involves labor, but it is necessary, because otherwise little or no harvest could be expected. So it is with the spiritual sowing of the word of God. We must clear away all the weeds from the field of our heart, that is, inordinate passions and inclinations, so that the seed of the divine word may sprout up, grow, and bring forth fruit. If, there-

fore, you go to church to hear the word of God, do as St. Bernard did at every visit to the church. He paused a moment at the church door, recollected himself, and then said interiorly: "Remain here, you earthly thoughts and cares, for I must now occupy myself with my God and the salvation of my soul; when I return I will take you back so far as it may be necessary." Banish all your temporal thoughts and cares, and suppress all inordinate emotions and inclinations, that you may devote yourselves untrammeled to the service of God and the business of your salvation.

2. *Have a hearty desire to be instructed in the Christian religion and to be guided to piety.* He that is not hungry will eat little or nothing of the bread and meat set before him; the food therefore, be it ever so palatable, will not do him any good. So it is with the divine food, the word of God. Hence, Jesus pronounces those blessed who hunger and thirst after justice.—*Matt.* 5: 6. He that has no longing after the word of God, gives us to understand that he is worldly-minded, and such a one may be preached to a hundred times, and yet he will remain the self-same worldling. Examine yourselves and see whether your hear the word of God with true Christian zeal, or only from habit or compulsion.

3. *Invoke the Holy Ghost.*

(*a.*) *For the preacher;* since "neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth, but God, that giveth the increase."—*I. Cor.* 3: 7. Let the priest preach ever so well, he will effect nothing, if the Holy Ghost do not enlighten his hearers and render them susceptible of good. He may labor all the night, but will catch nothing. St. Augustine says: "We may call, and, with much noise exhort to good, but if there be none to teach inwardly, all noise on our part is useless." For this reason St. Paul exhorts the Ephesians to pray for him that speech may be given him, that he may open his mouth with confidence, to make known the mystery of the gospel.—*Ephes.* 6: 19.

(*b.*) *For yourselves.* We need the grace of God for everything good. "Without me (without my grace) you can do nothing."—*John* 15: 5. The chief means for the obtaining of divine grace is prayer. "Your Father who is in heaven will give good things to them that ask him."—*Matt.* 7: 11. For this reason we invoke the Holy Ghost, the Giver of grace, before the sermon. As, according to the gospel for to-day, the devil tries to destroy the fruit of the word of God by taking it out of the hearts of the hearers, lest, believing, they should be saved, so you must be earnest in soliciting the Holy Ghost for his assistance.

4. *Be present from the beginning of the sermon.* He who comes when half the sermon is over will profit very little by the rest, because he does not participate in the invocation of the Holy Ghost, on whom the fruit of the sermon especially depends, and because he has not heard the introduction explaining the principal object of the sermon, and, perhaps, just what would have been most important for him; again, because he violates the honor due to God, disregarding his holy word so much that he does not care to hear all of it. It is God who speaks through the preacher and announces to us his holy word. Who is to wait? God or man? Coming in late also disturbs those who are already present, and hinders more or less the utility of the word of God in their regard. Be in good time.

PART II.

That the sermon may profit you, you must hear it—

1. *With attention.* If some one speaks to me and I pay no attention to his words, I may as well be a thousand miles away. The same applies to the Sunday sermon. Mere bodily presence is useless. Inattention at the sermon shows a want of reverence. A person when talking feels aggrieved and insulted when he sees that no attention is paid to him; and will God, think you, be quite indifferent when he sees his holy word so utterly disregarded that persons will not condescend to pay any attention to it? Strange that it should be so very difficult to get the attention of Christians to the word of God. It is only too true what a learned man once said: "Many bring their ears to the sermon, but not their heart." With many who are present at a sermon the mind is absent; it is at home, at the daily occupations, or in some other place; or if it remains in the church it is captivated by other things; it is turned to those present, and is occupied perhaps with the style of the bonnets or other wearing apparel, or delights in sinful imaginations and desires; and thus it happens that when the sermon is over they do not remember a word of it. There are not a few who regularly take a nap during the sermon. When the priest begins to speak, they close their eyes, begin to yawn, and are soon asleep; the sermon is for them a time of repose, and they sleep till the priest has finished speaking. What profit will they derive from the best sermon?

2. *With humility.* God comes with his grace only into the hearts wherein he finds humility. "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.—*James* 4: 6. Christ says: "I confess to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast

hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones."—*Luke* 10: 21. The Christian doctrine, according to these words, makes a salutary impression only upon the humble and produces fruit only in them. Jesus indicates this truth, saying: "The poor have the gospel preached to them." By the poor we must here understand those who, knowing their sinfulness and impotence, humble themselves before God, receive his word with a believing heart, and regulate their life accordingly. How necessary it is to hear the word of God with humility the example of the Jewish people teaches us. The humble among them, especially the common people, as the Apostles and disciples of Jesus were, received the gospel joyfully and became believers; but the proud Scribes and Pharisees persevered in their unbelief and impenitence. So it is to-day. The common people, who are humble, profit by sermons; the proud, on the contrary, who pride themselves on their learning, disdain the word of God, criticise the language, pay more attention to the manner of the delivery than to the matter of the discourse; or if they do pay attention it is not with the wish or hope of being instructed and converted.

3. *With a heart solicitous for salvation*, that is with the intention—

(*a.*) *Of being better instructed in religion.* In matters of religion you can always learn something, and if we should live to be a hundred, we should never cease to perfect ourselves in the science of salvation, according to the admonition of the Apostles: "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."—*II. Pet.* 3: 18. In our days particularly a thorough knowledge of religion is necessary, in order not to be led astray by the specious arguments which unbelievers and sectaries bring against the Catholic Church.

(*b.*) *Of amending and perfecting ourselves.* This is the principal object of sermons. Sinners are to be converted, the lukewarm to be roused, the weak to be strengthened, and the imperfect to be led to perfection. This object the hearers of the word of God should always have in view, because, without exception, they are themselves either sinners, or lukewarm, or weak, or imperfect. He who hears sermons with any other intention, as, for example, to give himself the appearance of a fervent Catholic, or to gratify his curiosity, abuses the word of God.

PART III.

That the sermon you hear may profit you, you must afterwards—

1. *Meditate on what you have heard.* It is not enough to put the food into the mouth, it must also be masticated and then passed into the stomach and be digested, for only in this way it preserves, nourishes, and strengthens the body. It is the same with the word of God. After having received it into ourselves by hearing, we must digest it that it may nourish our souls, that is, we must meditate on it, apply it to our individual case, and keep it in our memory. This the Blessed Virgin Mary did, for she kept all the words of Jesus in her heart. It is not a good sign when after the sermon you yield to distractions, speak only about worldly, light, or perhaps sinful things, and at once entirely forget the word of God. How can it yield fruit in such cases?

2. *Make good resolutions,* practice what has been preached to you. Every sermon contains, not only general, but also special instructions and admonitions to virtue. We must therefore make general and particular resolutions; *general,* resolving earnestly after every sermon again to regulate our life according to the principles of the gospel; *particular,* resolving to avoid some particular fault, to perform some good action.

3. *Carry out the good resolutions we have made.* That is the principal point, "for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified."—*Rom.* 2 : 13. "If a man be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he shall be compared to a man beholding his own countenance in a glass: for he beheld himself, and went his way, and presently forgot what manner of man he was."—*James* 1 : 23, 24. What does it profit a man to behold himself in a glass, if he do not wash off the filth he sees on his face? What does it profit a man to believe firmly, and live badly? The Jews listened to the discourses of Jesus, but as they did not live according to the precepts therein inculcated, they were rejected. He who hears the sermon, but changes not his perverse mind and conversation, will be judged and punished more severely, for "that servant who knew the will of his lord, and prepared not himself, and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes."—*Luke* 12 : 47.

PERORATION.

You know now what you must do, so that the word of God which is preached to you may profit you. Prepare yourselves for every sermon by purifying your hearts from all worldly dissractions and cares, from all inordinate inclinations and desires; be anxious to allow yourselves to be taught and corrected, and for that end implore the Holy Ghost to give you his grace. Always hear the word of God with attention, humility, and a heart solicitous for salvation; meditate on what has been preached to you, make good resolutions, and put them into practice. "Blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it."—Luke 11: 28. Amen.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Epistle. *I. Cor.* 13: 1-13. Brethren: If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy, and know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity is patient, is kind: charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth: beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never falleth away whether prophecies shall be made void, or tongues shall cease, or knowledge shall be destroyed. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect shall come, that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. But when I became a man, I put away the things of a child. We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face Now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I am known. And now there remain faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

THE NECESSITY, QUALITIES, AND DURATION OF CHARITY.

In the primitive ages of Christianity God frequently communicated extraordinary gifts to believers, such as the gift of tongues, foretelling future events, healing the sick, and raising the dead. Such gifts God had also granted to the Christians at Corinth, which, however, some ot them did not make use of as they should. They gloried in those gifts, and exalted themselves over those

who did not possess them. This evidently was pride. Others, who had not received such gifts, or to a less extent, were aggrieved, and envied their more favored brethren. This also was wrong and sinful. St. Paul, then, considered it desirable to explain to the Corinthians these extraordinary gifts, and to point out that they are without any merit whatever unless they be united with charity. In this epistle he speaks *of the love of our neighbor*:

I. Of its necessity;
II. Of its qualities;
III. Of its duration.

PART I.

To convince us of the necessity of brotherly love, the Apostle assures us that the greatest spiritual gifts and miracles, even the most heroic virtues and good works, are valueless before God and useless for heaven without this love of our neighbor.

1. *If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.* The charity of which the Apostle here speaks is the love of our neighbor, linked with that of God. Without this charity the most unlimited and perfect gift of speech is useless, and he who is endowed with it has as little merit as bells and musical instruments when they produce sounds. The Apostle and many other Saints, as St. Francis Xavier, St. Dominic, St. Vincent Ferrer, spoke quite fluently foreign languages which they had never studied, but they did not become saints or save their souls by this gift of tongues, but by their virtues, and especially by their love of God and of their neighbor. If we understood and spoke all the languages of the world, and had not charity, we should have as little merit before God as a dumb man, whose mouth never utters an audible, articulate sound.

2. *If I should have prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.* The meaning of this is: If a man should have the gift of foretelling future events more accurately than any prophet previously; if he had a knowledge embracing all that is natural and supernatural; if he had faith in its full perfection and in all its strength, so that he could work miracles that would astound even Moses, but was at the same time destitute of charity, he would be nothing in the eyes of God, and would not gain any merit whatever for eternity. Charity ranks higher than all knowledge, and a simple-minded peasant who loves God and his neighbor is more in the eyes of God than

the most exalted professor in whose heart pride dwells and not charity. Nay, charity is more valuable than even wonder-working faith. It is probable that Judas himself performed miracles, but, being destitute of charity, he was damned. If, therefore, for the love of God you assist the poor and needy in their necessities, or forgive an offense magnanimously, you are doing more than if you raised the dead to life.

3. *And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.* The Apostle goes still further, you see, and says that the most excellent works, even those which are highly commended in the Sacred Scripture, such as alms and martyrdom, are worthless without charity. Let me illustrate this by an example taken from the Lives of the Saints. Two Christians, Sapricius and Nicephorus, living at Antioch, were great friends for a time, but, for some unknown reason, fell out, and lived in enmity. Sapricius was afterwards cast into prison on account of his faith, and condemned to death. The Pagans endeavored, by means of glowing promises and various torments, to shake his faith, but he remained steadfast, and was therefore led out to the place of execution. Nicephorus, hearing of this hastened to him, and casting himself at his feet, implored his forgiveness, calling him a martyr. He repeated his petition several times, and always more urgently, but in vain; Sapricius turned his eyes away from him, and even on his way to death would not hear of forgiveness. Now notice the punishment. God withdrew his grace from the unforgiving soul. Sapricius, who up to this time had so firmly confessed his faith became an apostate; he sacrificed to the idols and lost the crown of martyrdom. Now, let us suppose that this irreconcilable Sapricius had really died for his faith, would he have obtained a place among the martyrs in heaven? No; he would have been cast into hell as a martyr for the devil. How necessary is the love of our neighbor! how useless the most heroic virtues, and even martyrdom, without charity! Hence, St. Augustine is right in saying: "You may have all whatsoever; if you have not charity it profits you nothing; and if you have nothiug but charity, you have fulfilled the law."

Part II.

St. Paul now mentions the qualities that the love of our neighbor should have, and thus enables us to know with certainty whether we have it or not. Charity, he says—

1. *Is patient, is kind.* He who has charity bears with the weaknesses and frailties of his fellow-men, does not complain impatiently of what he it obliged to endure from them; does not injure them, but does them good. Do you love your neighbor in such a manner?

2. *Charity envieth not.* He that has charity wishes well to all, he rejoices when things go well with them, and he is grieved when some evil befalls them. How many are there among us who are envious, and therefore destitute of one of the principal qualities of charity!

3. *Dealeth not perseverely.* He that has charity does not act impetuously, presumptuously, or hastily, because he is not governed by his passions but by the spirit of God. We also must guard ourselves against imprudence and over-hastiness in words and actions, because otherwise we shall frequently sin against our neighbor.

4. *Is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own.* He who has charity never elevates himself above others, though they be less than he, does not look down upon others with pride and contempt, does not act from self-interest, but would rather suffer loss himself than gain an advantage at the expense of others, especially the poor. Does your conscience not reproach you with having sinned against the love of your neighbor?

5. *Is not provoked to anger, beareth all things, endureth all things.* He who has charity, is meek, not excitable, fosters no anger or ill-will in his heart, bears patiently with his neighbor, and even receives injuries with equanimity. Oh, how small is the number of Christians whose charity has these attributes!

6. *Thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth.* He who loves his neighbor does not judge rashly, never misconstrues his actions, takes no pleasure in the evil that is done, but rather grieves when he hears or sees that some one does wrong, and rejoices in good actions by whomsoever performed.

7. *Believeth all things, hopeth all things.* He that has charity thinks well of his neighbor, and always hopes for the best; he does not despair of the greatest sinner, but loves to think that he will eventually amend his life. It is therefore a sign that we love our neighbor but little or not at all, if we will not believe the good we hear of him without striking and convincing proofs, and are inclined to think ill rather than well of him.

These are the qualities which the true love of our neighbor should have. If we contemplate the love of Jesus on the cross, we find in it all these qualities. The saints imitate Jesus herein Let us do likewise. "He that loveth not, abideth in death."—*I. John* 3 : 14.

Part III.

How long is this charity to last?

1. *Charity never falleth away, whether prophecies shall be made void, or tongues shall cease, or knowledge be destroyed.*

(*a.*) The gifts of the human mind exist only in the present life. They will cease hereafter, when the end for which they were given shall have been attained. They were given to serve as evidence of the divinity of Christianity; and as the state of imperfection for which they are intended will have an end, they too will cease, like a constantly produced effect with its producing cause. *Prophecy* will cease, for hereafter there will be no future that could be revealed. The *gift of tongues* will cease, for hereafter the blessed will not speak as we do now. Their language will be an inarticulate, spiritual one, and *one* only. They will know and understand one another by mutually beholding and contemplating one another, as it were, in a bright mirror. *Knowledge*, such as it exists upon earth, will cease, for in the life to come none will instruct, or be instructed, investigate, or study, because every one will know what is required for his happiness.

(*b.*) As a reason why prophecy and knowledge will cease hereafter the Apostle indicates their deficiency. All prophecies are more or less defective, because for the most part they are obscure and disclose but very little of the future. No less defective is all human knowledge. That which we know in proportion to that which we do not know is very little, and even our knowledge of that which we fancy we do know is very defective and imperfect. For this reason St. Paul describes all knowledge and prophecy here as imperfect, and says that our present state stands in relation to the future like that of a child to a man, that all our knowledge here below is imperfect, and, as it were, childish; but in the other world it will be perfect, like that of a man; that here we see as through a glass, in a dark manner, but there we shall see as it is in reality and in truth. A child that dies immediately after Baptism will have in heaven an incomparably greater knowledge of natural and supernatural things than the

most renowned scientist or the most learned philosopher possesses here below.

2. *Faith and hope will also cease hereafter.* There can be no necessity for faith hereafter, because there we shall see and know all that we here believe. The blessed in heaven possess in eternal security what they so long hoped for upon earth; but charity remains for ever. They love God and one another, and find in this love their highest felicity. *Faith, hope, and charity are three sisters.* Faith and hope remain upon earth, charity enters the other world, unites itself most intimately with God, and is happy in him and with him through all eternity.

PERORATION.

Charity, then, is the greatest and most necessary of all virtues, for it imprints on all virtues the seal of God's pleasure, and also meritoriousness; and whilst all extraordinary spiritual gifts, even faith and hope, are of a perishable nature and end with this life, charity never falls away, but has, like God, an eternal existence. Love God above all things, and your neighbor as yourself. Let charity take deep root in your heart, love friend as well as foe, speak ill of no one, revile none, but show in word and deed that you are disciples of Jesus by loving the brethren. Blessed are you, if you conscientiously keep this great commandment; for "he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him." —*I. John* 4: 16. Amen.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

GOSPEL. *Luke* 18:31-43. At that time: Jesus took unto him the twelve, and said to them: Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man. For he shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon: and after they have scourged him, they will put him to death, and the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things, and this word was hid from them, and they understood not the things that were said. Now it came to pass when he drew nigh to Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the wayside, begging. And when he heard the multitude passing by,

he asked what this meant. And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out, saying. Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. And they that went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace. But he cried out much more: Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus standing commanded him to be brought unto him: And when he was come near, he asked him, saying: What wilt thou that I do to thee? But he said. Lord, that I may see. And Jesus said to him: Receive thy sight, thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he saw, and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

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2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

JESUS FORETELLS HIS PASSION, AND HEALS A BLIND MAN.

We stand at the portal of the forty days' fast, which begins next Wednesday. The Church could not have chosen a more appropriate gospel than that which I have just read to you. It treats of the passion of Christ, and this mystery of divine love is to be the principal subject for our consideration during the holy season of Lent. It also speaks of a blind man, who was healed miraculously by Jesus. There are always blind, spiritually blind men, to be found, especially during the days of the Carnival. Blind indeed are all those who, instead of preparing themselves during these days for the Lenten season, give full scope to their passions, and renew the excesses and vices of the ancient Pagans. Oh, that these blind persons would know their wretched condition, and in humility and contrition have recourse to Jesus, in order to obtain from him that healing which he is ever ready to impart and which the blind man of Jericho so happily received!

Let us consider to-day's gospel which is divided into two points:—

I. Jesus foretells his passion;
II. Jesus heals a blind man.

PART I.

1. *Jesus took unto him the twelve, and said to them: Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man.*

(*a.*) The twelve whom he took with him on his journey to Jerusalem, and to whom he foretold his passion, are the twelve

Apostles. Jesus had frequently during his life gone to Jerusalem; now he went for the last time, for in a few days he was about to suffer and die for us. When he says that all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning him, he refers to his passion and death. The prophets, especially Isaias and David minutely described, not only his life, but also his passion. Thus Isaias says (chap. 53) that there is in him neither beauty nor comeliness; that they thought him, as it were, a leper, as one struck by God and afflicted, and reputed with the wicked; and David, that they have dug his hands and feet, and have numbered all his bones; that they parted his garments amongst them, and upon his vesture they cast lots; that he cried out: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me;" that they laughed him to scorn, and gave him vinegar and gall to drink.—*Ps.* 21 and 68. These and all other predictions of the prophets were accomplished in Jesus.

(*b.*) Jesus know very well that the Jews had decreed his death, and yet he went up to Jerusalem and there made a public and solemn entry. He did this—

(1.) To show that he was truly the Messias and to give the Jews an opportunity of doing homage to him as the Messias, so that if they persevered in their unbelief they would have no excuse. God gives the necessary grace for salvation to all, but all do not embrace it. Remember the Jews, and reflect on the terrible consequences which the abuse of divine grace had for them, and make good use of all the graces which God gives you for your salvation.

(2.) To show the Jews that without his will they could not have executed their nefarious design of killing him. On God depends the success of whatever man proposes. If therefore you see the wicked oppress the Church and do much evil, be sure that they could not to it without God's permission. Everything, however, which God ordains or permits, will turn out well for those that love him. This must be our consolation.

2. *For he shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon; and after they have scourged him, they will put him to death, and the third day he shall rise again.*

(*a.*) Jesus foretells his passion and death in plain words. Why does he do so? To strengthen his disciples in their belief in him, that they might not be led astray when they should see him in his extreme humiliation. They could say: "What Jesus suffers does not occur accidentally, nor without his will and knowledge;

he foretold it; he is, notwithstanding his humiliation, the Son of God. The sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, far from weakening our belief in his divinity, only strengthen it." But it may be objected: The gift of prophecy was not necessary for Jesus to foretell his passion and death, for he knew that the chief persons among the Jews bitterly hated him and would endeavor at any cost to do away with him. But Jesus foretells his passion, not in general and indefinite terms, but very precisely and circumstantially, and especially his resurrection from the dead. All this is an incontrovertible proof of his omniscience, and consequently of his Godhead.

(*b.*) Jesus foretells his passion with perfect tranquillity, although, being omniscient, the unutterable pains which he was to endure stood vividly before his eyes. Why? Above all, that he might not discourage and terrify his Apostles; then to manifest his resignation to the will of God; and lastly, to teach us that the just man has no reason to fear death. If we have to suffer, let us be calm in the presence of those around us, in order to give them good example and to spare them as much as possible unnecessary sadness.

(*c.*) Jesus spoke, not only once, but frequently, of his passion and death, in order to give us to understand that they were always before his mind, whether he preached, worked, or rested. This should encourage us frequently to meditate on the passion and death of Jesus. Meditation thereon was from the beginning the school in which the saints learned Christian perfection. St. Paul so constantly meditated on the passion of Christ that he could say of himself that he knew nothing but Christ crucified. —*I. Cor.* 2. St. Philp Neri spent some time every day before the image of the Crucified, in meditation on the passion, and St. Philip's biographers say that he learned more from this than from any other book. Nothing is more profitable than meditation on the passion and death of Jesus. St. Bonaventura says: "If you wish to step from virtue to virtue, from grace to grace, from good to better, meditate daily and with all possible devotion, on the passion of Christ, for nothing produces in the soul so complete a sanctification as the contemplation thereof." Sanctify, then, the forty days' fast by meditating daily, or at least on Sundays and holidays, on the passion and death of Christ.

3. *And they understood none of these things; and this word was hid from them; and they understood not the things that were said.*

Jesus speaks plainly of his passion, death, and resurrection, yet his Apostles understand him not. How is this? Because,

being themselves Jews, they had not yet wholly divested themselves of the prejudices of their nation, and only with difficulty could they be brought to think of the promised Messias in lowliness and contumely, in suffering and death. They still clung to the notion of earthly power and majesty. Believing him to be really the promised Messias, what he said of his passion and death was quite unintelligible to them, and they persuaded themselves that it must refer to another person, or be understood only figuratively. Moreover, the Apostles were as yet worldly-minded; this was the chief reason why they did not understand their divine Master, for the worldly-minded man comprehends not that which is supernatural and divine. After the Holy Ghost had descended upon them on the feast of Pentecost the scales fell from their eyes, and they understood all that he had told them.

Be not governed by your passions, nor by the world, nor by the spirit of the world, but by the Spirit of God, who speaks to you through the Church, that you may be protected from all error and always walk in the path of virtue and truth.

PART II.

Now it came to pass, when he drew nigh to Jericho that a certain blind man sat by the wayside, begging. And when he heard the multitude passing by, he asked what this meant. And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.

(*a.*) A blind man, a poor man. It is said with truth that the poorest man does not feel so unhappy as a blind man, for whom the glorious sun never rises, but who continually languishes in the darkness and the shadow of death. Be thankful to God for the gift of sight, for it is the greatest of all temporal goods, but make good use thereof. Beware of the sins of the eyes; these have caused many, many to be cast into everlasting darkness. Pray daily with David: "Turn away my eyes, that they may not behold vanity."—*Ps.* 118: 37.

(*b.*) We can not blame the blind man for begging, because he was poor, and on account of his blindness he could not earn his daily bread. If you meet a poor blind person, think of the blind man of Jericho, and the goodness of Jesus displayed towards him, and give him for God's sake some alms.

(*c.*) The blind man was right in asking the people what it meant. If he had not asked, he would not have been told that Jesus was passing by, and consequently he would not have invoked his mercy. Let this be a lesson to you in every doubt and

uncertainty to ask the advice of prudent and well-meaning persons. This is always good and expedient.

2. *And he cried out, saying: Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. And they that went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace. But he cried out much more: Son of David, have mercy on me.*

(*a.*) They had only told the blind man that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, but he calls Jesus David's Son, and cries out to him, not merely to give him an alms, but to free him from his blindness. Thereby he professes his belief in Christ as the Son of God and the Redeemer of the world. This man, though physically blind, saw far better, according to the spirit, than many of those whose sight was good, but who were spiritually blind, for they would not acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God and the promised Messias. The number of the spiritually blind is very great in our days, and includes not only unbelievers and heretics, but also Catholics who disregard the duties of their religion and state of life, and live in impenitence.

(*b.*) *They that went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace,* either because they thought that this crying out would displease Jesus, or because it was irksome to them. If anything in your fellow-men, especially in the poor and sick, be troublesome, preserve Christian charity and patience, "for charity is," as we read in this day's epistle, "patient and kind, beareth all things, endureth all things." Reflect that God has also patience with us.

(*c.*) The blind man was not to be prevented from crying out; the more he was rebuked, the louder he cried out. You must also be constant in doing that which is good, and must not be discouraged when you meet with obstacles on the path of virtue. If the blind man had been intimidated by the rebukes of the people and held his peace, Jesus probably would have passed by without helping him. Perseverance shows earnestness, and is crowned with success.

3. *And Jesus standing commanded him to be brought to him. And when he was come near, he asked him, saying: What wilt thou that I do to thee? But he said: Lord, that I may see.*

(*a.*) Jesus allows himself to be invoked repeatedly without seeming to notice it. At length he asks: *What wilt thou?* although he knew beforehand what the man wanted. God always acts in this way; he knows our necessities, and is ever

ready to help us, but he wishes us, by earnest, constant prayer, and the avowal of our misery, to exercise confidence, patience, and humility, in order to make ourselves fit for, and worthy of, his help. "Then shalt thou call and the Lord shall hear; thou shalt cry, and he shall say: Here I am."—*Is.* 58: 9.

(*b.*) The words of the blind man, *that I may see*, comprise the principal qualities of a good prayer; that is, the acknowledgment of our misery and helplessness, and, therefore, humility. belief in the power of Jesus, and confidence in his goodness. Let us always present our corporal and spiritual necessities with humility, faith, and confidence, and, like the blind man, we shall attain the object of our prayer.

4. *And Jesus said to him: Receive thy sight; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he saw, and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.*

(*a.*) Here again Jesus manifests his divine power. He merely says: *Receive thy sight*, and on a sudden the blind man sees. Oh! what a consolation for us that we have a Redeemer who is mighty to succor us in all that concerns body and soul.

(*b.*) Jesus says: *Thy faith hath made thee whole.* Wherein does this faith consist? In this, that we receive all that Jesus teaches us by his holy Catholic Church as divine truth, hold it firmly, and regulate our life accordingly. Where this faith is wanting, prayer is not well pleasing to God, and is not heard. This faith is wanting to many.

(*c.*) The blind man showed that he was grateful for the wonderful gift he had received, for he glorified God, and followed Jesus. Let us likewise, by faithfully following Jesus, evince our gratitude for the countless graces and benefits which we have received.

PERORATION.

Let us make to-day two good resolutions:

1. During Lent frequently to meditate on the passion and death of Jesus Christ, that we may bring forth worthy fruits of penance.

2. To receive the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist, and to live for heaven, showing that though dwelling on earth we are leading a heavenly life. Amen.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

ORIGINAL SIN.

***A certain blind man sat by the wayside, begging.—Luke* 18: 35.**

The blind man mentioned in the gospel of this day, who sat by the wayside begging, signifies the whole human race, which, in the person of Adam, was cast out of paradise and plunged into the deepest misery, from which it could be redeemed only by Jesus Christ, the God-Man. As the first pages of the Sacred Scripture tell us, our first parents in paradise ate of the forbidden fruit and thereby sinned grievously against their Lord and Creator. This sin, with all its fatal consequences, was transmitted to all men, so that, with the exception of the Blessed Virgin, every one is conceived and born in sin. This is an article of faith and it shall be the subject of our reflection to-day. I propose to prove the existence of original sin and to show its consequences.

I. Its existence;
II. Its consequences.

PART I.

That original sin exists, is evident—

1. ***From the Sacred Scriptures.***

(*a.*) *Who can make him clean that is conceived of unclean seed? Is it not thou who only art?—Job.* 14: 4. Job here says that he is unclean and contaminated even in the very source of his being. He thus enunciates the dogmatic truth concerning original sin, and this passage is so explained by the most ancient Fathers of the Church, such as Clement, Cyril, Basil, and Augustine.

(*b.*) *Behold, I was conceived in iniquities; and in sins did my mother conceive me.—Ps.* 50: 7. Now, David was born in lawful wedlock and of pious parents; the words, therefore, "in sins did my mother conceive me," can not be referred to his pious mother, as if she had sinned at his conception; they must on the contrary, as all the Jewish and Christian interpreters of the Sacred Scrip-

tures say, be understood of David himself, as referring to his inheritance of original sin, in which, like all other men, he was conceived.

(*c.*) *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death, and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned.—Rom.* 5 : 12. The Apostle deduces the reason why all men must die, expressly from sin; but, as children also die, who personally can not have sinned, it is evident that they have inherited the sin of Adam, therefore are contaminated by original sin. The Apostle says: "All have sinned in Adam;" this does not mean that all have imitated Adam in sin, that all have transgressed the commandments like him, for, besides the children, there are not a few adults who lead a very holy life from infancy. All have sinned in Adam, in so far as his sin has been transmitted to them.

(*d.*) *We were by nature the children of wrath, even as the rest.—Ephes.* 2 : 3. How could we by nature, that is, from birth, or rather, from the first moment of our conception, be children of wrath, children in whom God is not pleased, if we came not into the world in the state of original sin? We were, therefore, contaminated with it from the first moment of our existence.

2. *From Christian tradition.*

(*a.*) This dogma of our faith regarding original sin was already held by *the holy Fathers and ecclesiastical writers of the first centuries.* Tatian: "Because of the disobedience of the first man we lost the Spirit of God, perfect justice and holiness."—*Orat. ad Græc.* 18. Irenæus: "Christ acquired salvation for us, so that we received in Christ again what we had lost through Adam, namely, the image and likeness of God."—*Iren. lib. III., cap.* 20. St. Augustine, who wrote whole books on original sin, exclaimed to the Pelagian Julian: "I have not invented original sin; the Catholic Church from the beginning has admitted it; but you, who reject it, are an innovator."—*Lib.* 2, *de nupt. et concup. c.* 12.

(*b.*) The practice of the Church proves the existence of original sin. From the very beginning of Christianity it was customary to baptize newly-born children. Since the Church judged baptism necessary for the salvation of those children, she evidently must have believed that they were contaminated with original sin, from which they were to be cleansed by baptism and thereby enabled to enter into heaven. To this may be added the adjurations which the Church always employed at the baptism of newborn babes. If they were not already contaminated by original

sin and subject to the dominion of the devil, these adjurations would be not only culpable superstition, but would dishonor God. If the child were stainless on coming into the world, it was God's. Why, then, should the words of exorcism and adjuration be spoken, in order to deliver the child from the power of the devil?

3. *From the belief of all, even Pagan nations.* If we journey from country to country all the world over, and inquire among all Pagan nations, we shall everywhere find the plainest vestiges of a belief in the original fall of the human race. The legends of all Pagan nations agree substantially in this, that in the beginning the people lived innocently and happily, but that a woman, at the instigation of the evil spirit in the form of a serpent, sinned and seduced her husband also; that this sin consisted in the eating of a forbidden fruit; that the cause of the sin was a vain desire of knowledge; and that in consequence of this sin the people were cast out of paradise and punished with various miseries.

(*a.*) The legend of the *Hindoos.* According to the legends of this people, *Schiva* (God), to try *Brahma* (Adam), made the blossom of a tree fall from heaven. Brahma, who wished to be like God, took the blossom and believed that he was really God. But God punished him, cast him out of paradise into the abyss, where he was to do penance, but on account of his repentance he was pardoned. Moreover, it is said that the first woman, who proceeded from the body of Brahma, enticed and seduced him (Brahma) to sin, and his body therefore became fog and darkness, that is, a mortal body subject to corruption. Lastly, the Hindoos believe that the wife of the Schiva fought the serpent, or evil spirit, crushed his head with her foot, and cut it off, and that she will come again in the end, to destroy the evil spirit, and restore the government to the old (God) Schiva.

(*b.*) The legend of *the Chinese.* These call the woman the first fountain and the root of all evil. One of their poets says: "We inhabited a happy region, but a woman cheated us out of it. Everything was subject to us, a woman plunged us into slavery; she hates innocence, and loves vice. The wise man built a wall round about vice, but the woman who wished to know everything better tore it down. She is now like a bird whose song announces death." In this woman, Eve is manifestly described, who, blinded by the devil, desired the knowledge of good and evil, and wished to be like God, and on that account brought death on herself and on her posterity.

(*c.*) The legend of the *ancient Germans.* A woman was the cause why the happy life in Asgard (paradise) came to an end. As long as the woman was not there, the gods and men lived in friendship, and abundance and joy prevailed. But when the woman came, who was in compact with bewitching spirits and belonged to the race of giants who rebelled against God, all happiness was over, and the friendship between God and man ceased. The result was that God put down the degenerate race, and rejected it. Asgard's kingdom of felicity (paradise) was broken up for ever, and the evil spirits obtained a certain power upon earth. (Lucken, "Traditions of Mankind.") There we again see the history of the fall, which was caused by a woman, and called down the chastisements of God upon the whole human race.

PART II.

The consequences of original sin are—

1. *The loss of sanctifying grace, of our filial relation with God, and of the right and title to the kingdom of heaven.*

(*a.*) As original sin defiles man interiorly and makes him corrupt, God, infinitely holy, can love him no longer, but must necessarily be displeased with him. *The loss of sanctifying grace* or of the love of God is a necessary consequence of original as well as of every other grievous sin. Hence, the Council of Trent says: "If any one affirm that the man Adam, after he had transgressed the law of God, has not lost at once sanctifying grace with original justice and incurred God's indignation, or has lost them only for himself, but not also for us, let him be anathema."—5. *Sess.*

(*b.*) *The loss of our filial relation with God* is necessarily connected with sin. God surely can not regard them as children who have so grievously offended him, nor be to them any longer an affectionate father. As long as man is defiled with original sin, he can not pray to God with filial confidence: "Our Father, who art in heaven." The filial relation to God we have obtained again through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer; wherefore the Apostle says: "You have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba (Father)."—*Rom.* 8: 15.

(*c.*) Another consequence of original sin is *the loss of the right to heaven,* for only children have a claim to the inheritance of their father. But, as through sin we ceased to be children of God,

we have no longer any right to claim the heavenly goods as an inheritance. Therefore we must, in order to be able to enter into heaven, be again made children of God by holy baptism, the bath of regeneration, as Jesus teaches: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he can not enter into the kingdom of heaven."—*John* 3 : 5. Original sin, then, has, as the most renowned theologians say, entailed upon us only the loss of heaven, and not eternal damnation, as a consequence. Pope Innocent III. says: "The punishment of original sin is the deprivation of the sight of God, but the punishment of actual sin is the eternal torment of hell." SS. Bonaventure and Thomas of Aquin teach the same. According to this doctrine, children who die without baptism are indeed excluded from heaven, but are not condemned to hell.

2. *Ignorance, concupiscence, and inclination to evil.*

(*a.*) Original sin weakened our understanding, so that it can comprehend supernatural things only with great exertion and imperfectly, and is exposed to all kinds of errors. How fatally original sin operates upon the understanding we can easily perceive from the horrible aberrations of the Gentiles; in the course of time they lost almost all knowledge of God, could not distinguish between right and wrong, between virtue and vice, adored men and beasts and hideous idols of wood and stone as God.

(*b.*) If were still in the state of original justice, our will would be powerful, and we could easily do what is good, because we should never be assailed by passion, nor have the least inclination to evil. But as we are now constituted, there reigns in us concupiscence which, though in itself no sin, yet always vitiates every good action, and is continually drawing us to what is sensual and bad. This concupiscence manifests itself in us in early childhood, and, unless it be continually fought against and kept under control, grows strong with us as we advance in years, and dies only when the body sinks into the grave. The Apostle beautifully describes this evil concupiscence: "For I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man, but I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is, in my members." —*Rom.* 7 : 22, 23.

3. *Tribulations, pains, and, lastly, death.* We may compare the earth to a cemetery, in which one tombstone stands near the other, for the sufferings and afflictions of men are as numerous as the grains of sand on the sea-shore. There are external sufferings, the inclemency of the weather, the difficulties of labor

and of our station in life, sickness and the racking pains of the body, accidents, misfortunes, losses; again, interior sufferings, such as sadness, fear, anguish, terror. Justly the wise man says: "Great labor is created for all men, and a heavy yoke is upon the children of Adam, from the day of their coming out of their mother's womb until the day of their burial into the mother of all."—*Ecclus.* 40: 1. And after man has endured thousands of hardships and pains in this world, he must offer to sin the last and most difficult sacrifice—*he must die*, "for the wages of sin is death."—*Rom.* 6: 23.

Moreover, the earth has been cursed by God on account of Adam's sin (*Gen.* 3: 17, 18, a curse which still rests upon it, and it was on account of this sin that men came into the servitude of the devil.—*II. Tim.* 2: 26; *Heb.* 2: 14.

PERORATION.

These are the fatal consequences of original sin, which, with this sin, passed on to all men. Frequently represent to yourselves these terrible consequences, and avoid actual sin, as you could not possibly have escaped original. Think and act as the saints, who could not be induced for the sake of anything in this world to offend God by sin. If you have the misfortune to fall into grievous sin, make an act of contrition and be reconciled to God without delay by a good confession, and constantly lead a penitential life. Watch and pray that you may not fall into temptation, and labor to extirpate your sinful inclinations: let no day pass without some little act of mortification and self-denial, that you may preserve the grace of God and be called to take possession of the inheritance of heaven. Amen.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

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4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

HOW WE ARE TO KEEP THE CARNIVAL.

Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man.—Luke 18: 31.

The three days immediately preceding Ash Wednesday are called Shrovetide, and are the conclusion of that twelve days'

season of festivity called the *Carnival*. The best definition of a word is not unfrequently found in its etymology. Now this word is derived from the two Latin words *caro*, flesh, and *valere*, to live well, and thus it signifies a season in which one indulges the flesh more than usual. Careless and superficial lexicographers define it to be "a Catholic feast, or season of festivity," ignoring the fact that the Church has always been opposed to these foolish enjoyments and has endeavored to keep the faithful away from them. The great Pope Benedict XIV. says: "After the Pagan excesses, which were customary on the first day of January, had been abolished, another objectionable custom came into vogue. It generally takes place between Septuagesima and Lent. In this custom there is so much that is disgraceful and pernicious that a certain ambassador of the Turks, making a sojourn in a Christian country during Shrovetide, returned to Constantinople and officially reported, "that the Christians at a certain time of the year become insane, but get their senses back again by the mysterious virtue of a certain dust, which is strewed on their heads."

Let us not spend this time in the spirit of the world, but according to the ordinance of God. How are we to celebrate Shrovetide?

I. What the mass of to-day teaches us;
II. What certain ordinances of the Church teach us.

PART I.

This Sunday's mass teaches us how we should keep Shrovetide. Let us consider—

1. *Its Introit.* It reads: "Be thou unto me a God, a protector, and a house of refuge to save me, for thou art my strength and my refuge, and for thy name's sake thou wilt lead me, and nourish me. In thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be confounded; deliver me in thy justice and set me free."—*Ps.* 30.

(*a.*) This Introit is take from the thirtieth Psalm, which David sang when he was hotly pursued by Saul, and was in the greatest danger of losing his life. The Church reminds us by it that the present is a time of spiritual affliction and peril, and calls upon us to have recourse to God like David, that he may protect us. The world's ways are not the ways of God's saints at any time. Wickedness always abounds, but is especially abroad during those days with every kind of temptation, masquerades, balls, parties, dances, theatricals, to allure persons, especially you, young men and young women, to perdition. St. Charles

Borromeo says: "Behold the net, which the devil, our foe, throws out in these days; behold the ditches of sin, into which so many people blindly fall, behold the ruin of so many souls, which is accomplished in these days."

(*b.*) In the thirtieth Psalm David appears as a type of the suffering and dying Jesus. The Church, in these days of worldly enjoyments, places before our mind's eye the passion and death of Jesus, in order to keep us away from these sinful pleasures. What child would devote himself to pleasure and joy if his father or mother were suffering and dying? And is not Jesus more to us than father or mother? What kind of Christians should we be if, at the time when Jesus is about to suffer and die for us, we were thoughtlessly to enjoy ourselves and renew the excesses of the Pagans!

2. *Its Epistle.* St. Paul speaks therein of charity, of its meaning and necessity, then of its qualities and duration, and lastly of its superiority over all talents and virtues.

(*a.*) The Church has undoubtedly selected this epistle on charity for to-day, in order to fix our thoughts upon our divine Saviour, who in the work of Redemption exhibits himself as the most perfect exemplar of love. "Christ hath loved us, and hath delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God."—*Ephes.* 5: 2. If we reflect during these days of Shrovetide on this love of Jesus, we shall disdain to participate in the vain, sinful doings of the world. This love will also urge us to pray for our fellowmen, that during these days they may not offend God.

(*b.*) Examples: St. Madgalen of Pazzi remained almost without intermission before Jesus in the tabernacle during Shrovetide, bewailing the offenses against God and the ruin of so many souls, and praying for the conversion of sinners. St. Catherine of Siena watched and prayed day and night that not many sins might be committed. St. Gertrude was accustomed on these three days, by prayer, silence, and other pious exercises, to implore God for the amendment of the people. One day she saw in heaven our divine Saviour in great glory, sitting upon a throne; before him stood St. John the Evangelist, who was writing in a large book. She asked our Lord what St. John was writing. He answered that his disciple was writing down all the good works and mortifications that Christians performed during Shrovetide, that after their death they might be more abundantly rewarded.

3. *Its Gospel.* It corresponds with the Introit, for it also treats of the passion of Christ. There is no exercise more salutary for

the sinner or for the saint than meditation on the passion of Jesus Christ.

(*a.*) *For the sinner.* A pious priest in Florence possessed a picture representing Jesus crowned with thorns. He daily stood before it, meditating on the infinite love of Jesus towards man. On the opposite side of the street lived a vain daughter of the world, who, believing that the priest looked so often in the glass in order to admire himself, was scandalized and deridingly asked him to show her that wonderful mirror. The priest, in compliance with her request, brought his picture to her house. When she looked at the picture of our Redeemer with the crown of thorns on his head, his eyes full of tears, his countenance covered with spittle and blood, she was deeply moved. The priest said to her: "Here is the desired mirror, behold yourself in it every day. If it makes no impression upon you and does not move you to repentance, you will be lost." These serious words sank so deeply into her soul that she wept bitterly over her sins, and, full of contrition, cast herself at the feet of the priest, and asked for forgiveness. She renounced the world and its vanities, and led a penitential life for the rest of her days. Such is the powerful effect of the contemplation of the passion of Christ: "It wounds the hardest and inflames the iciest hearts."

(*b.*) *For the just.* In our suffering and dying Jesus we observe all the virtues which we should practice, such as humility, patience, meekness, obedience, the love of enemies, resignation to the will of God, and all in the most consummate perfection; wherefore St. Augustine calls the cross a pulpit, from which Jesus instructs us in all virtues. "If you wish to climb from one virtue to another, and to lead a perfect life, daily meditate on the passion of Christ, since there is nothing that urges on the soul to holiness so powerfully as this."—*St. Bonaventure.*

Meditate, then, on the passion and death of Christ, that you may enter with fervor upon the holy season of Lent, and derive therefrom the inestimable grace of a truly penitential spirit.

Part II.

As regards the ordinances of the Church, I shall mention only two:

1. *The exposition of the Most Holy Sacrament.* During these three days the Blessed Sacrament is exposed in many places for the Forty Hours' Adoration, or *Quarant Ore.*

(*a.*) This pious custom was begun at Milan in the year 1534; it was introduced into Rome by St. Philip Neri in 1548, and was sanctioned by Pope Clement VIII., who, on November 26th, 1592, issued a solemn Bull concerning it. The devotion owes its origin to Father Joseph, a Capuchin friar at Milan.

They decorated churches and altars, exposed the Blessed Sacrament, made processions, preached sermons, and held public devotions. This was not without fruit. Many ceased to take part in the pleasures and entertainments of the season, and participated instead in the public devotions. In these they found greater and sweeter joys than in the frivolous enjoyments of the world. Popes Benedict XIV. and Clement XIII. emphatically recommended this beautiful devotion to the faithful, and enriched it with many indulgences. The latter Pope, in particular, granted a plenary indulgence to all who devoutly visit the Blessed Sacrament and worthily receive the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist.

(*b.*) This should encourage you to visit Jesus in his Sacrament of love, to adore him, and make what little reparation is in your power for the outrages heaped on him during these days. Do not follow the world, which invites to its sinful pleasures and enjoyments, but follow your divine Saviour, who affectionately and earnestly invites you, saying: "Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened and I will refresh you."—*Matt.* 11: 28. I solemnly assure you that you will derive more real joy and lasting felicity in one hour spent in true devotion before your divine Saviour in the Blessed Sacrament than is derived by worldings who spend whole days and nights in fleeting, sensual pleasures. The truth of David's words will be verified in you, and you will exclaim with the Royal Prophet: "How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! for better is one day in thy courts above thousands (a thousand days in the joys and pleasures of the world)."—*Psalm* 83: 1-11.

2. Confession and Holy Communion.

(*a.*) The Church earnestly desires that the faithful during these days should go to confession and communion. For this reason she admonishes priests to hear confessions. She also grants a plenary indulgence to all who sincerely and penitently confess their sins.

(*b.*) The reason why the Church so anxiously wishes you to confess and communicate during these days, is twofold:

(1.) That you may stay away from these dangerous and frequently sinful enjoyments. If our young people would confess

and communicate at this season, there would be no apprehension that they would suffer any spiritual loss; they would find no pleasure in the foolish doings of men, nor be tempted to participate in them.

(2.) That you may prepare yourselves for Lent as well as possible. The worthy reception of the sacraments is the best possible preparation, for the more you purify your conscience from all stains of sin, the more graciously will God receive your penitential works in Lent, and the greater benefits will he bestow upon you. It may also be expected that you will employ the holy season of Lent more profitably if you sanctify the days immediately preceding it by the reception of the sacraments and other pious exercises, than if you desecrate them by various excesses and frivolities. Those who spend Shrovetide in wickedness will generally continue their worldly and sinful life during Lent, and will think but little of penance and amendment.

PERORATION.

I have now explained to you how you are to spend Shrovetide according to the will of the Church. May God grant that you may spend these days, not with the children of the world in dissipation and frivolity, but in holy exercises of devotion and in retirement with the good and and the pious. Consider that you belong to Jesus, and must not therefore renew the follies and vices of the ancient Pagans. Consider also that these days are the proximate preparation for Lent, and dedicate them accordingly by meditating on the sacred passion and death of our Lord. By frequently visiting and adoring him in the Blessed Sacrament, and by the worthy reception of the holy sacraments, you will prepare for him a more suitable dwelling-place in your hearts. Amen.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

WE GO UP TO JERUSALEM.

We go up to Jerusalem.—Luke 18: 31.

PART I.

Jesus says: *We go.* We must also say the same to one another, whether we consider our *temporal* or our *spiritual* life.

1. *Our temporal life.*

If we look at the clock, we scarcely notice the hands move; and yet they do move, and move continually, till the clock runs down, and must be wound up again. So it is with our life; it is continually going, and every minute brings us nearer to eternity, each step brings us nearer the grave. "We have not here a lasting city; we seek one that is to come."—*Heb.* 13: 14. Our life is only a lingering death; months and years pass by, and we scarcely notice them. We often hear people say: How quickly the time flies! Ah! what is our life? "It is a vapor which appeareth for a little while, and afterwards shall vanish away."—*James* 4: 15. "My days have been swifter than a post: they have fled away and have not seen good, they have passed by as ships carrying fruits, as an eagle flying to the prey."—*Job.* 9: 25, 26 As our life, so everything that it offers us is vain and fleeting. The brother of that great servant of God, Thomas à Kempis, was proud of a new house he had built for himself; but a friend of his told him that the house had one great defect. "What defect?" he asked. "The defect is that you made a door in it." "How can the door be a defect?" "Oh," said his friend, "the day will come when you will be carried out of it a corpse, and must leave house and all."

So it is. Everything that this life gives, riches, pleasures, honors, dignities—all will disappear with it, all ends with death, and "only the grave remaineth for me."—*Job.* 17: 1. Many things even do not last until death, but vanish after a few years, weeks, days, or hours. This is particularly true of joys and pleasures; they last but a few hours, and leave behind them nothing but an indistinct remembrance, perhaps a bitter remembrance of having offended God.

2. *Our spiritual life.*

(*a.*) Even here there is no stand-still. There is no such thing as standing still in the spiritual life. Change is the eternal law of nature; there is a continual going, either *backward* or *forward.* St. Augustine says: "If we begin to stand still in the way of holiness, we go backward; and when we make no further progress in virtue, we quickly become worse." We can not remain in one or the other state in such a way that we neither progress nor retrogress in that which is good; he that becomes no better, becomes worse. He who is tepid and not solicitous for the salvation of his soul, without noticing it, goes back. In the beginning he commits perhaps only venial sins, but by-and-by he falls into mortal ones. It is therefore not only a good counsel but a stern duty to endeavor to make progress in virtue, because the salvation of our soul depends on it.

(*b.*) You must therefore guard yourselves against retrogarding in the spiritual life. Some are badly off enough already, with a conscience loaded down with mortal sins. How deplorable would be your lot if in these days you should again offend God! How deplorable, should persons, on the very threshold of the holy season of Lent, the season of sorrow for sin, of forgiveness and God's mercy, turn their backs deliberately on God, saying, in acts if not in words, that they care nothing for the divine mercy, that they are not and will not be sorry for their sins! Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation, and be on your guard lest in these dangerous days you fall into sin.

PART II.

Up to. Jesus went up to Jerusalem, which lies considerably higher than Jericho, whence he started; therefore his way was upwards.

1. Our way is also upwards. We are obliged to ascend rugged Mount Sinai, which lies eight thousand feet above the level of the sea, if we wish to attain our last end. On Mount Sinai the ten commandments were given to the children of Israel. We ascend this mountain when we keep the commandments of God. We are bound, much more than the Israelites, to observe these commandments, for we must keep them not only according to the letter, but also according to the spirit. Our divine Saviour teaches us this, saying: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."—*Matt.* 19: 17. All the saints went to heaven because they kept the commandments, and all the damned were cast into hell because they followed the broad, easy way, and

transgressed the commandments. Examine yourselves seriously to-day, and see whether you go up or not; whether you keep God's commandments or not, that you may find out whether you are on the road to heaven or to hell.

2. Many, perhaps, quiet themselves with the thought that this is Shrovetide; that now is not the time to be climbing Mount Sinai. God, say they to themselves, will not be so particular about his commandments. This is a wrong conclusion to arrive at. God's commandments are always binding, at Shrovetide as well as on Good Friday, and there is not a moment in life in which we are allowed to transgress or disregard them. A hundred years ago there was a Shrovetide, as well as now. Many may have said to themselves then, it is Shrovetide, let us have a good time of it. And they did probably have a good time of it; they enjoyed all the pleasures within their reach, and thereby committed sin. But how was it when they came to die? Did God take no note of these sins? Indeed he did, and called them to a rigorous account, and unless they did penance for them he cast them away for ever. And the wretched beings, how they now curse those sins and that good time which caused their damnation! Therefore; *upwards* take your way; keep God's commandments now as well as at any other time.

PART III.

To Jerusalem.

There are two Jerusalems, one *ancient and earthly*, *the other the new and heavenly* Jerusalem. That we may go with Jesus to the latter we must go up with him to the former.

1. *The ancient and earthly Jerusalem.* This was the last time that Jesus went up to this Jerusalem, for the time had come when he should accomplish the work of our Redemption by his passion and death on the cross: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man. For he shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon; and after they have scourged him, they will put him to death."

If we desire to be true disciples of Jesus, we must accompany him on his journey to Jerusalem; for he emphatically says. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."—*Matt.* 16: 24. Therefore St. Paul writes: "They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences."—*Gal.* 5: 24.

What Jesus and his Apostle say holds good for Shrovetide as well as for all seasons; the world calls this time the Carnival, a horrible name, which means nothing else than to serve the flesh, as the Pagans formerly did, who, wearing masks and bearing torches in their hands, bawling and screaming through the streets and public thoroughfares, made night hideous with their frantic bacchanalian orgies, and who yielded without restraint to dissipation and debaucheries of every sort. Where is the Christian who would not feel ashamed to spend Shrovetide in such a manner—a Christian who would not reflect on the word of St. Peter Chrysologus: "They who will jest with the devil on earth, can never rejoice with Christ in heaven." Let us therefore go up to Jerusalem with Jesus, and show the world that we are Christians who no longer serve sin (*Rom.* 6: 6), but "live godly and justly, and piously in this world."—*Tit.* 2: 12.

2. *The new and heavenly Jerusalem.*

(*a.*) He who now goes up to the earthly Jerusalem with Jesus, and crucifies his flesh, with its vices and concupiscences, may hope that he will go up with him to the new and spiritual Jerusalem. St. John, speaking of this Jerusalem, says, "I John saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice from the throne, saying: Behold the tabernacle of God with men; and he will dwell with them. And they shall be his people; and God himself with them shall be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more; for the former things are passed away."—*Apoc.* 21: 2-4. Oh, how glorious, how beautiful, how blessed will this new Jerusalem be! When King Theodoric of Italy entered Rome, surrounded by a thousand courtiers, the splendour of the scene was so great that St. Fulgentius exclaimed to his companions: "Oh, how delightful must not the heavenly Jerusalem be, when this earthly Rome is so beautiful! With what glory will not Jesus Christ adorn his confessors and saints in heaven, if here upon earth he permits such a glory to the servants of contemptuous vanity."

(*b.*) To this new, spiritual Jerusalem turn your thoughts. If the world invite you to its enjoyments, and use all exertions to represent its joys and pleasures to you in the most alluring manner, —when you see all around you full of pleasure and joy, think of the heavenly Jerusalem, and say with St. Ignatius: "Oh how disdainful is this earth to me when I contemplate heaven." Truly, the contemplation of the happiness of heaven will make you

stay away from these enjoyments, either entirely, or enjoy them only so far as they can be enjoyed without offending God.

PERORATION.

Raise your eyes to heaven, for you were created not for earth, but for heaven. Climb up to Mount Sinai, and keep the commandments of God at all times. Go up with Jesus to Jerusalem, meditate on his passion and death, and lead a retired, penitential life, for only by so doing can you hope to obtain admission into the heavenly Jerusalem. Amen.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

6. MORAL SKETCH.

THE SAD CONDITION OF THE SINNER; HOW HE CAN AMEND IT.

Son of David, have mercy on me.—Luke, 18: 39.

Of all temporal evils blindness may be said to be the greatest. Even the pious Tobias felt his blindness so much that he said to Raphael the Archangel: "What manner of joy shall be to me, who sit in darkness, and see not the light of heaven."—*Tob.* 5: 12. And he asked of God the favor of allowing him to die: "O Lord, do with me according to thy will, and command my spirit to be received in peace, for it is better for me to die than to live."—*Tob.* 3: 6. We need not wonder, then, that the blind man mentioned in the gospel of this day cried out so loudly and perseveringly to Jesus: "Son of David, have mercy on me." But by far a greater evil than blindness is sin, for this evil, unless it be expiated by true repentance, has eternal perdition as its consequence, whilst blindness renders man wretched and miserable only for the short space of this life. Let us to-day turn our eyes to the blind man, in whom the sinner is depicted, and consider—

I. In what a sad condition the sinner is, and
II. How he can amend it.

PART I.

To understand the wretched condition of a sinner, we need only apply to him what is said of the blind man in the gospel: *A blind man sat by the wayside, begging.*

1. *A blind man.* This blind man had no eyes at all perhaps, he may have lost them by some accident or sickness; or he may have had eyes, but they were so injured as to deprive him of sight; from whatever cause his blindness originated, his condition was sad and miserable because he could not see.

Sinners resemble the blind man.

(*a.*) Many sinners are entirely destitute of the spiritual eye, which is *faith.* To this class belong the Gentiles, of whom there are about eight hundred millions. How deplorable is their condition! They have no knowledge of God, and are idolaters; the greatest sins and vices, such as human sacrifices, bloody revenge, suicide, debauchery, many of them look upon, not only as lawful, but even as pleasing to their deities. St. Paul describes their unfortunate condition.—*Rom.* 1: 23. What thanks do we not owe God for having called us to the light of the true faith! How solicitous we ought to be to aid the blind Pagans in coming to the knowledge of the true God, by prayer and contributing our mite to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith!

(*b.*) There are others whose eyes are covered with a film or otherwise injured; and they are the infidels and free-thinkers of our days, who, by associating with impious men, or by the reading of bad books and newspapers, or in consequence of their dissipations and debaucheries, have lost the faith. They are so blind that they call virtue vice, and vice virtue—darkness light, and light darkness—bitter sweet, and sweet bitter.—*Is.* 5: 20. They have caused their blindness themselves, and are therefore culpable before God. See that you do not lose the faith; and to prevent any such woeful calamity befalling you, do not keep company with the enemies of the Church, and do not read bad books and irreligious newspapers.

2. *He sat.* Why did the blind man sit? had he no feet? Yes, he had feet, but, in order to walk and move around, one requires not only two feet, but also the light of the eye. As he was destitute of this, he was obliged to sit in the place whither he had been conducted.

The sinner also sits. He might walk, but he dare not, because he is deprived of sight: he dreads the difficulties connected with a thorough conversion and a penitential life, and for this reason he can not resolve to rise from sin and traverse the narrow road of virtue. Examples from life: Tell the *avaricious* that all the goods of this world are vain and perishable, that their acquisition and possession carry with them much pain and disquietude, that Christ exclaims "woe to the rich," and declares that it "is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." (*Matt.* 19: 24); your avaricious man will hear all in cold blood, but not change his mind one iota. Say to the *drunkard*, that by his drunkenness he degrades himself below the beast, that he brings poverty, shame, and wretchedness on himself in this world, and hereafter must share the lot of Dives if he will not amend his life; it is only waste of time; he will return to his glass as though you had not uttered a word. Tell the *impure man*, that by his base passion he renders himself despicable before the whole world, and that he rushes headlong into perdition; you will preach to deaf ears. Tell the *unjust man*, that unless he makes restitution and restores what is ill-gotten, he can never be saved; he will pay no heed. Thus the sinner sits like the blind man and remains sitting. He is too cowardly a slave to his passions, and therefore can not resolve to rise and enter on the way of penance. Do you not resemble the blind man, who *sat?*

3. *By the wayside.* The place where the blind man sat was a public thoroughfare, used by numerous travellers; it led to Jericho, a city which, cursed by God, was destroyed by the Israelites (*Jos.* 6: 21); that road was rendered dangerous and insecure by robbers, and, as the gospel informs us, a man who was going to Jericho fell among them; whereupon they stripped him, and having wounded him, went away, leaving him half-dead.—*Luke* 10: 30.

Such is the road on which the sinner travels. It is not the narrow way that leads to life, and which only a few find, but the broad way that leads to destruction, and by which many enter. —*Matt.* 7: 13, 14.

Many a sinner quiets himself with the thought: The majority of people live as I do; it is a universal custom; what I do therefore can not be so very wrong; if God should condemn me, no one would be saved. What insane language! A sin remains a sin, whether one or a thousand commit it. God is just, and condemns millions of impenitent sinners, with the same rigorous justice, to eternal fire, as he would one. Example: the deluge. Every one who commits a mortal sin, becomes guilty of eternal damnation; repentance, a true and speedy repentance, is the

only means of deliverance. "Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish."—*Luke* 13 : 3. He who merely confesses his sins, but without sincere contrition and a firm purpose of amendment, is not truly penitent, and will not escape eternal damnation. He who does not repent in time, but delays his conversion from one day to another, is in imminent danger of being cast away, according to the word of the Lord: "Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day; for his wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance he will destroy thee."—*Ecclus.* 5: 8, 9. Every one who has once entered upon the ways of sin, stands in danger of damnation, for he comes into the power of Satan who will spare no pains to destroy his soul. The holy Fathers and spiritual writers do not hesitate to say that the number of those who have never lost their baptismal innocence and are saved, exceeds the number of those who are saved by means of penance. Therefore, guard against committing a mortal sin! You may never be able to recover sanctifying grace by means of penance.

4. *Begging.* Why did the blind man beg? Because he was poor, and, in consequence of his blindness, was not able to earn his bread by work.

The sinner is in such a situation. He is poor, wretchedly poor, though his broad acres be numberless and he be a millionaire, because he is destitute of the supernatural goods, which alone have any value before God. He is deprived of *sanctifying grace*, that precious pearl which Jesus has purchased and merited by his precious blood; he lacks all merit for heaven, for any merits that he had were lost the moment he fell into grievous sin, as the Lord says: "If the just man turn himself away from his justices and do iniquity . . . all his justice which he had done shall not be remembered."—*Ezech.* 18 : 24. He is deprived of the friendship of God and the right to heaven, for by sin he forfeited this friendship, and barred heaven against himself by his own hand. Add to this, that so long as he remains in a state of sin, all the good works he does are without the least merit for heaven; he is separated from Christ, the vine, and therefore can bring forth no fruit.—*John* 15 : 6. To him, the words of the epistle of this day apply: "If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."—*I. Cor.* 13 : 3.

Oh, how wretched is the condition of the sinner, how much more wretched than that of the blind man, who sat by the wayside begging!

PART II.

What must the sinner do, in order to put an end to his wretched condition? He must do what the blind man in the gospel did.

1. *He believed.* When he heard the multitude passing by, he asked what it meant, and being told that *Jesus of Nazareth was passing by*, he cried out, saying: *Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.* Hereby he showed that he believed that Jesus could help him. And Jesus himself testifies that his faith had made him whole.

Faith is the beginning of salvation, the root and ground of justification. Without faith it is impossible to please God, without faith we can not be admitted into the number and society of his children.—(Council of Trent, sess 6, cap. 8.) If, therefore, the sinner is to be justified, he must believe all that God has revealed and proposes by his Church to our belief; he must especially believe that God will be gracious and merciful to him for Jesus' sake. A sinner who lacks this faith does not hope in God, is not inclined to love him, does not repent of his sins, has no purpose of amendment—at least, not from supernatural motives, and can not therefore obtain the forgiveness of his sins. Matters stand very badly with a sinner who has gone so far as to lose the faith; he has on his forehead the brand of the condemned. May the Lord preserve us from such unbelief!

2. He had recourse to *prayer*, and cried out repeatedly with a loud voice: *Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.* On this petition and crying-out depended his healing. If he had been silent, no doubt Jesus would have passed him by without helping him.

Thus the first requisite for the sinner, in order to be reconciled with God, besides faith, is *prayer.* So long as he does not turn to God, so long as he does not pray, it is evident that he is still blind and obstinate, and that he has not the wish to be converted. How could a sinner of that kind obtain forgiveness? Moreover, conversion is a grace (indeed one of the greatest) which God does not grant without prayer. Hence we see that all those who were truly converted, prayed. Witness David; the penitent thief on the cross; St. Paul. So long as the sinner does not pray in the spirit of repentance; and with fervor and devotion, there is no hope of his conversion.

3. The blind man was persistent and persevering. Those that went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace, but he cried out much more: *Son of David, have mercy on me.* Suppose that he had been intimidated and had held his peace, what then? Very probably he would not have been cured of his blindness.

If the sinner wishes to effect his conversion he must manfully surmount all obstacles. The world, the flesh, and the devil exert themselves indefatigably to make him waver in his resolution of amendment; they tell him that he will be ridiculed, mocked, abused, and jeered at; they assure him that God is infinitely merciful, that he does not take things so strictly as the priests say; they try to persuade him to enjoy himself like others of his age and condition in life, and suggest that there is time enough yet for penance. It frequently happens that the sinner, after having made a resolution of amendment, has violent temptations, such as fear, despondency, and false shame; his associates in sin ridicule him, and endeavor to argue or to laugh him out of his purpose. But all these things must not deter him from the execution of his design. How much a man will do in order to gain some little temporal advantage or to avert a temporal loss from himself! What does he not endnre? What sacrifices does he not make? And should the sinner show himself to be weak and cowardly when there is a question of the salvation of his immortal soul?

4. *He commanded him to be brought unto him.* Jesus, moved to compassion by the poor man's repeated crying-out, stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him, and then cured him of his blindness. It was necessary to bring him to Jesus, for if he had not been brought to him, he would not have been made to see. As the blind man, so the sinner must be brought to Jesus, that he may find grace. Jesus himself requires this, saying, "Come to me all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you."—*Matt.* 11: 28. But who are they who bring us to Jesus? They are—

(*a.*) *Conscience.* That interior voice of God, which urges and impels the sinner to quit his sinful life, and by repentance to save his soul.

(*b.*) *The words of the priest and other well-meaning persons.* The priest exhorts, entreats, persuades, threatens, speaks of God's justice and mercy; holds up the joys of heaven as a reward, points to the abyss of hell as a punishment, that the sinner may break his fetters and be converted. How often do parents and kind friends advise him to make his peace with God!

(*c.*) *Joyful or sad events in his life.* God prospers and blesses his undertakings, gives him good health and old age, or visits him with various crosses and afflictions, in order to draw him to himself by benefits and chastisements. Happy the sinner who is brought to Jesus—he is saved; but woe to him who stubbornly resists, and remains sitting by the wayside of sin—he must

purish. Ask yourselves how you have acted heretofore, and if you have allowed yourselves to be brought to Jesus.

PERORATION.

Take the blind man for a pattern, and do as he did, in order to find wifh Jesus grace and the forgiveness of sin. Make an act of faith, pray with fervor and confidence; for faith and confidence are the first and most necessary requisites for the obtaining of every grace, and therefore for reconciliation with God. Be not deterred by any obstacle, trust in God, and full of confidence, say with the Apostle: "I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me."—*Phil.* 4:13. Be governed by the goodness of God, who in various ways endeavors to purify and sanctify you, and if you have found grace and salvation with Jesus, glorify him and follow him; be faithful to the end, "and hold fast the confession of your hope without wavering."—*Heb.* 10: 23. Amen.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

7. MORAL SKETCH.

WHAT WE MUST AVOID IN SHROVETIDE.

See, therefore, brethren, now you walk circumspectly; not as unwise, but as wise, redeeming the time; because the days are evil.—Ephes. 5: 15, 16.

The Church reads for us to-day the gospel in which Jesus speaks of his passion and death, that by the contemplation of this mystery of divine love we may be protected from the excesses to which many Christians yield during Shrovetide. She also sets before our eyes a blind man, to indicate that Christians who participate in these sinful entertainments are struck with spiritual blindness, since they do not know the baseness and perniciousness of these enjoyments. Oh, that all would consider the words of the Apostle in these days of levity and extravagance. "See, therefore, brethren, now you walk circumspectly; not as unwise, but as wise, redeeming the time; because the days are

evil." That you may conduct yourselves during these days as becomes Christians, I shall show—

I. What you must omit, and
II. What you must do.

PART I.

What you are obliged to avoid in these days needs no lengthy explanation. They are the entertainments and enjoyments which are in vogue in towns and villages, such as balls, dinners, suppers, masquerades, by which God is much and grievously offended. It is evident that you must keep away from them, for—

1. *They are of Pagan origin.* As all writers agree, they are nothing but a continuation of the bacchanalian feasts dedicated to the god of drunkenness and impurity, which had their origin with the Egyptians, and from them were brought to the Greeks and Romans, and lastly were introduced and spread in Christian countries. Now, as all Paganism comes from the devil, the spirit of untruth, so do the enjoyments and dissipations of Shrovetide. The Fathers of the Church assert this. "Shrovetide," says St. John Chrysostom, "was not invented by those who are destined for heaven, and whose names are already registered in the heavenly country, neither is it an invention of man, but of the devil, who introduced it for the purpose of drawing the soldiers of Jesus Christ after him and of weakening them." St. Augustine calls these Shrovetide pleasures the sacraments of the devil, because they have effects directly opposite to those of the sacraments of Christ. Who would not detest these enjoyments, which have the devil for their author?

2. *They are very unbecoming to Christians.* St. Paul writes: "Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and envy, but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences."—*Rom.* 13: 13-14. Do not Christians who participate in these enjoyments do quite the reverse of what the Apostle commands? Do they not sin by intemperance in eating and drinking, by impurity, contention, quarreling, and even murder? Do they not add fuel to the concupiscence of the flesh? And is it decorous for a Christian, who pretends to be an image of Christ, to act as insanely, extravagantly, and shamefully as a Pagan? Judge for yourselves.

3. *They are very dangerous and injurious, especially for youth.* St. Charles Borromeo says: "They are the nets which the devil,

our adversary, throws out in these days; they are the ditches of sin, into which so many men fall blindly; behold the ruin of the many souls which is accomplished through them." Surely, Satan triumphs in these days; how much he domineers and tyrannizes over the people of God! And this is the case not only with the common crowd, but even with such as at other times are earnest and sedate. In these days people drink to excess, and drunkenness is the path that leads to all vices; they dance, and of dancing St. Epraim says: "Where there is music and dancing and clapping of hands, there is the obscenity of men, the ruin of women, the sadness of the angels, and the festival of the devil." What renders these enjoyments particularly dangerous and pernicious is that they are kept up till far into the night, under cover of which debaucheries, dissipations, and vices can be more easily practiced.

4. *They prepare great punishments for those who can not control themselves.* Job (21: 12, 13) says: "They take the timbrel and the harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ; they spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to hell." Hell is threatened as a punishment to those who in these days give full scope to their passions. A few years ago, in a certain city of Germany, they buried Shrovetide, as it was customary in some places —a silly farce. Of all the *dramatis personæ* no one sustained his character so well as the man who impersonated the dying Shrovetide. He imitated the actions and gestures of a dying person so exactly, and in such a perfectly natural way that the spectators in the midst of their revelry were held spellbound. But the frivolous jest ended in a very tragical manner, for, to the horror of all, it suddenly transpired that he who had played his part so well was really dead! Where is his soul now? And where are the souls of many of those who, twenty, thirty, forty or more years ago, participated in these enjoyments, and with the sins they then committed passed into eternity? And what have you to expect, who will participate in these enjoyments this year, loading your conscience with mortal sins? May these enjoyments not be the cause of your eternal damnation! Consider this well, and beware of doing anything which might make your dying hour miserable, or cause your eternal perdition.

PART II.

What are you to do at this time? You must,—

1. *Watch,* and above all,

(*a.*) *Over yourselves.* Seeing that the children of the world enjoy the proffered pleasures to their heart's content, some of

you might be tempted also to participate in them; then you would be in danger of offending God by grievous sins. It may be that others will persuade you not to make an exception of yourself in these days, but to take your share in the fun and frolic, enjoying what is going on like everybody else. You must therefore be on your guard not to be led astray, either by the inordinate motions and inclinations of your own heart, or by frivolous companions. This watchfulness is all the more necessary in case, owing to circumstances, you can not absent yourselves from such amusements or decline all participation therein. You must watch over yourselves with redoubled care, that you may do or say nothing which you would afterward regret.

(*b.*) *Over others.* Parents must watch over their children, that they may not suffer the loss of their virtue and innocence. Christian charity obliges all, without exception, to influence by word and example their fellow-men, to persuade them to abstain from amusements which offend God. St. Chrysostom says: "If we have a feeling of brotherly love, and take an interest in the salvation of others, we must restrain those who in these days rush into perdition, fall victims to death and go to hell."

2. *Pray for yourselves,* that in this time of levity you may not offend God, and pray for *others,* especially those who participate in these enjoyments, that they may not fall into sin. This intercessory prayer is—

(*a.*) *Pleasing to God,* because thereby we manifest our zeal for his honor and our love of our neighbor. "Let us pray for one another," says St. Chrysostom. To pray for one's self is, as it were, an impulse of nature, but to pray for others is a work of grace. Our misery compels us to pray for ourselves, but to pray for others is a work of the purest love. St. Stephen, whilst being stoned to death, prayed for the youthful Saul, and this prayer was so acceptable to God that by it the conversion of Saul was effected. Hence St. Augustine says: "If St. Stephen had not prayed, the Church would not have St. Paul." Stephen was heard by God, and by his prayer the sins of Saul were blotted out. If, therefore, in these days we pray for others, especially young people, we may do much good and perhaps save many a soul from perdition.

(*b.*) *Very useful to us.* St. Catherine of Siena, during Shrovetide, received an extraordinary grace. She had retired to her cell and was engaged in fervent prayer. Jesus, accompanied by his Mother and surrounded by angels, appeared to her, and said: "Because thou hast despised the vanities of the world, and hast chosen the

cross and a life of penance, seeking the highest and only good, I will espouse myself to thee,"—and in these words he made her his bride. Thus Shrovetide, which is for the frivolous a time of many and great sins, is for Christians who retire and devote themselves to exercises of devotion a time of great and many graces.

(*c.*) *The wish of the Church.* Over three hundred years ago the Forty Hours' Devotion was introduced into the Church for the three days preceding Ash Wednesday. The object of this devotion is that by the prayers of the faithful the numerous sins which are usually committed during Shrovetide may be prevented, and that sinners may obtain mercy. To promote this beautiful devotion, Pope Clement XIII., in the year 1765, granted a plenary indulgence to all those who after a worthy reception of the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist visit and adore the Blessed Sacrament solemnly exposed. The wish of the Church, and the indulgence which she grants us, should incite us to visit the church frequently during these days, and assist at the public devotions.

3. *Do other good deeds,* especially the works of mercy. Thus the consort of Louis XII. of France in thanksgiving for her restored health, caused fifteen thousand ducats to be distributed among the poor during Shrovetide. If you give the money, which others spend for these enjoyments, in alms to the poor and needy, it will certainly please God greatly, and bring you a reward both for time and eternity. In former days it was customary for pious Christians to retire during these three days for a spiritual retreat, in order to prepare themselves worthily for the approaching season of Lent.

I will relate to you a remarkable conversion that was once brought about by such a retreat, and by which a notorious worldling saved his soul.

In the house of the Oratorions at Avignon, in France, lived Father Allard, a very holy man. He wrote a few lines to his friend, Saze by name, informing him that he was coming to spend Shrovetide with him. He gave the letter to the porter who thought the name was Suze, and accordingly sent the letter to him. Suze, a dissipated worldling, was in his villa, surrounded by several people who intended to spend Shrovetide with him, when the letter was handed to him. He read it, looked at the signature, and was amazed. He could not comprehend why Allard, such a distinguished and holy man, wished to spend Shrovetide with him. His friends laughed at his perplexity, but he became only the more serious and sad. Seeing that they could not bring him out of his serious mood, they left him, thinking that his notion,

as they termed it, would pass away during the night. But poor Suze could not sleep that night, the voice of his conscience became louder, and he recognized the finger of God. Rising from his bed, he threw himself on his knees, and bitterly bewailed his sins.

In the morning he was an entirely changed man. He sat down and wrote to Father Allard, and thinking that he intended to come for the benefit of his soul, thanked him for the letter and requested him not to come, as he was unworthy of his visit; but promised that he himself would visit him at the end of Lent and make a general confession. Suze then lived in retirement and in a penitential spirit, not only during the three days, but throughout Lent. A pious religious who had heard of his conversion visited him, and persuaded him not to put off his confession to the end of Lent. Suze at first remonstrated a little, saying that he wished to confess to Father Allard, but owing to the repeated entreaties of the religious he was induced to make his confession to him the following day. He did so and with the most profound contrition. The religious then left him, but had scarcely reached the main entrance of the castle when he was called back and told that Suze was dying. He returned to the dying man, who had been struck by apoplexy, and had just time to give him the last consolations of our holy religion, when he breathed his last, dying the death of the just in the arms of the priest, another example of the infinite mercy of God.

PERORATION.

Shrovetide was to this man a time of grace and salvation. It will be the same to you, if you omit what you should omit and do what you should do. Keep away from all places of sinful enjoyment, rejoice in the Lord, watch and pray, go to confession and communion, and redeem your sins by alms and works of mercy to the poor. Amen.



FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

EPISTLE. *II. Cor.* 6: 1-10. Brethren: We do exhort you, that you receive not the grace of God in vain. For he saith: "In an acceptable time have I heard thee; and in the day of salvation have I helped thee." Behold, now is the acceptable time: behold, now is the day of salvation. Giving no offense to any man, that our ministry be not blamed: but in all things let us exhibit ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in tribulation, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in prisons, in seditions, in labors, in watchings, in fastings, in chastity, in knowledge, in long suffering, in sweetness, in the Holy Ghost, in charity unfeigned, in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the armor of justice on the right hand and on the left; by honor and dishonor: by evil report and good report: as deceivers and yet true: as unknown, and yet known: as dying and behold we live: as chastised, and not killed: as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing: as needy, yet enriching many: as having nothing and possessing all things.

1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

THE APOSTLE GIVES US SALUTARY ADMONITIONS, **AND EN**COURAGES US TO IMITATE HIM.

We are to sanctify the forty days' fast, which we began on Ash Wednesday, by exercises of devotion, of interior and exterior mortification, and of Christian love and mercy, that we may prepare ourselves worthily for the coming feast of Easter and become partakers of the fruits of the Redemption. The Church also exhorts us to this in the epistle of this Sunday, and urges us not to allow the holy season of Lent, that precious time of grace, to pass by unprofitably. Let us then briefly consider the contents of this epistle. The Apostle gives us therein—

I. Salutary admonitions, and
II. Encourages us to imitate him.

Part I.

St. Paul in the epistle for this day gives us a twofold admonition—

1. *Not to receive the grace of God in vain, and*

2. *To profit by the acceptable time to secure our salvation.*

1. By grace we here understand *the grace of faith, and the purification and sanctification united with this grace.* We have received this grace in baptism. Before baptism we did not belong to Christianity; we were heathens. Hence when the priest said: What dost thou ask of the Church of God? we responded by the mouth of our sponsors, Faith. When we received the Sacrament of Baptism, faith, together with hope and charity, was infused into our souls; at the same time we were cleansed, sanctified, made children of God and heirs of heaven. What a grace this is! Millions and millions of men are born, live, and die without baptizm, while we, a few hours after our birth, were baptized without our cöoperation, and without any merit of ours. Oh! how grateful to God ought we to be for this grace, how faithfully should we preserve it! Example: The holy martyrs, who sacrificed their lives for their faith.

(*a.*) *The other graces which, through the merits of Jesus Christ, we receive for our salvation.* I mention here the graces which flow to us from the sacraments, the holy sacrifice of the mass, and the public worship of God; also the special graces which we receive according to our state of life. It were easier for us to count the beatings of our pulse or to number the respirations of a lifetime, than to enumerate the graces which we continually receive from God. On the last day, when every secret will be revealed, all the graces which God has given us will pass before our eyes, and full of amazement, we shall exclaim: "Oh, how good God was towards me; what did he not do to rescue and to save me!"

(*b.*) According to the admonition of the Apostle we should not receive these graces in *vain.* What does this mean? It means, we should highly esteem the graces of God, take care of them, and employ them for the end for which they are given. How great is the number of Christians who receive grace in vain! To this class belong those who forfeit the grace of baptism—perhaps in early youth—who, after every confession, relapse into their former sins, who neglect the sacraments, the hearing of the word of God, the opportunities and means of salvation, who dis-

regard the voice of their conscience, and salutary lessons and admonitions. Let each of us ask himself: Am I one of the many who receive grace in vain? Woe to him who receives grace in vain, his hopes of heaven are vain, his perdition certain.

2. *Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.* This acceptable time, or this day of salvation, is—

(*a.*) With regard to the new dispensation, the *whole space of time from the redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ till the end of the world.*

How fortunate are we that the we were not born before this time, or under the Old Law. How slight were the graces and means of salvation for those who lived then compared with ours. Their sacrifices consisted of animals, flour, incense; our sacrifice is Jesus Christ, the God-man; their sacraments were empty signs without grace; our sacraments are expiating and sanctifying: their entire divine worship was only a shadow and a type; ours is life and truth. How repugnant was it not under the Old Law even for the just to die; for they departed from this world with the consciousness that they were obliged to languish for hundreds and thousands of years in Limbo before they could be admitted to the vision and fruition of God. How confidently can we die under the New Law, if we only live piously, since heaven is opened to us, into which we can enter immediately after death, or after our purification in purgatory.

(*b.*) With regard to every individual, *our lifetime upon earth is that acceptable time.* As long as man lives he may work out his salvation, for God gives the necessary grace for it; but how long our lifetime will last we do not know; as a rule, it runs down sooner than we expect. "Man knoweth not his own end, but as fishes are taken with the hook, and as birds are caught with a snare, so men are taken in the evil time, when it shall suddenly come upon them."—*Eccltes* 9: 12.

As we know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man shall come, we must work "whilst it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work."—*John* 9: 4. As this night may come upon us at any moment, we must always be solicitous for our salvation. How much would the damned in hell give for an hour or a minute in order to make their peace with God! And we, who have not hours and minutes for our salvation, but a long series of years, shall we let this acceptable time pass away unprofitably?

(*c.*) With regard to the Ecclesiastical Year, in particular, *the present holy season of Lent,* to which the Church also applies it.

During Lent we celebrate the most important mysteries of our holy religion, we call to mind the forty days' fast of Jesus in the desert, his combat with Satan, whom he overcame three times, and especially his passion and death, by which he accomplished the work of our Redemption. Should we not avail ourselves of this holy time for entering into ourselves, for penitential exercises, and in general for the salvation of our souls? What kind of Christians should we be, if we were to spend heedlessly or desecrate by sin and vice this holy time in which Jesus is represented to us as suffering and dying?

PART II.

The Apostle urges us to follow him. Like him, we must—

1. *Not give offense to any man;*
2. *Endure sufferings and persecutions courageously;*
3. *Preserve the chastity of our station in life;*
4. *Keep our heart free from all inordinate love of earthly things.*

1. *Giving no offense to any man.* St. Paul could say this of himself in truth; for, so far from giving offense to any man, his life and acts were a glorious pattern for believers and unbelievers. Let us guard against giving scandal or bad example, against being an occasion of sin to any one. Let us consider the greatness of this sin. He that gives scandal is the adversary of Christ, a murderer of souls, a demon in human form. "Woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh."—*Matt.* 18: 7. Be careful not to say or do anything which has even the appearance of evil, that you may not be the occasion, far less the cause, of any person's sin; on the contrary, "so let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."—*Matt.* 5: 16.

2. *In all things let us exhibit ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in tribulation, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in prisons, in seditious, in labors, in watchings, in fastings.* The whole life of St. Paul was an uninterrupted chain of tribulations and sufferings, and the words of Jesus were literally fulfilled in him: "I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."—*Acts* 9: 16. Of the Jews five times did he receive forty stripes save one; for years he languished in the prisons at Rome; the Jews several times raised commotions against him, as in Pisidia (*Acts* 13: 50), at Iconium (*Acts* 14: 2), at Thessalonica (*Acts* 17: 5), where he was in imminent danger of losing his life. On his journeys and in the preaching of the gospel he was obliged to endure hunger and thirst, vigils and

fasting, cold and nakedness, fatigue and shipwreck, contumely and false accusations, interior and exterior sufferings, in a word, tribulations of every sort. But all these things did not make him impatient or discourage him; the more the clouds of adversity and suffering lowered around him, the more his courage grew, and full of zeal, he exclaimed: "Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword?—*Rom.* 8: 35.

3. *In chastity.* The Apostle understands here mainly virginal chastity, which he preserved during his whole life, and which he recommended to the Christians when he said: "I would that all men were even as myself (perfectly continent) . . . It is good for them if they so continue, even as I."—*I. Cor.* 7: 7, 8. Virginal purity, or the single state, is preferable to the married state, as St. Paul says again: "He that giveth his virgin in marriage, doth well, and he that giveth her not, doth better."—*I. Cor.* 7: 38. Single as well as married persons should take to heart the word of the Apostle: "Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you are bought with a great price. Glorify and bear God in your body."—*I. Cor.* 6: 19, 20.

4. The Apostle in saying: *We live; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as needy, yet enriching many; as having nothing, and possessing all things*, declares that his heart is not attached to anything earthly, wherefore he also asserts elsewhere: "I count all things to be but loss, for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but as dung, that I may gain Christ."—*Philip.* 3: 8. The reason why St. Paul counts all earthly goods—riches, honors, and pleasures—but as dung, is because that which Jesus Christ promises and gives, infinitely excels all that the world can give.

This should also be our disposition. We should have no inordinate desire after any temporal things whatsoever, nor should there be anything we so love and desire, so eagerly seek to obtain, that, even if we offend God, we will not give it up. The will of God and the salvation of our soul come first; we are allowed to seek and to love temporal things only so far as they may be necessary or useful for our salvation. Let us examine ourselves and see if we inordinately desire, seek, and love anything earthly.

PERORATION.

Let us put in practice by word and example what St. Paul teaches us in the epistle for this day. Let us renew our fervor in the service of God and our solicitude for the salvation of our souls. Let us make a good use of the innumerable graces which we receive from God for our purification and sanctification, remembering that one day we shall have to give an account of every grace we have received, and that our eternal salvation depends on the timely and fervent use of grace. "Providing good things not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of all men" (*Rom.* 12: 17); From all appearance of evil refrain yourselves" (*I. Thess.* 5: 22); "Be patient in tribulation" (*Rom.* 12: 12), and "Be humbled under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in the time of visitation."—*I. Pet.* 5: 6. "Refrain yourselves from carnal desires, which war against the soul" (*I. Pet.* 2: 11), and "Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life which is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the concupiscence thereof. But he that doth the will of God, abideth for ever."—*I. John* 2: 15-18.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

GOSPEL. *Matt.* 4: 1-11. At that time: Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards he was hungry. And the tempter coming, said to him: If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. Who answered and said: It is written. "Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God." Then the devil took him up into the holy city, and set him upon the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him: If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written: "He hath given his angels charge over thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest perhaps thou dash thy foot against a stone." Jesus said to him: It is written again, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Again the devil took him up into a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them,

and said unto him: All these I will give thee, if, falling down, thou wilt adore me. Then Jesus saith to him: Begone, Satan, for it is written: "The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve." Then the devil left him; and behold, angels came and ministered to him.

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2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

JESUS FASTS, AND OVERCOMES SATAN.

At the age of thirty Jesus manifested his Divinity, which was hidden in his infancy and youth. He manifested himself first to the Jews because the promise of the Messias was first made to them and to their forefathers. He then publicly received the baptism of St. John, upon which occasion the heavens were opened and the Holy Ghost was seen to descend upon him in the form of a dove, and a voice was heard from heaven: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Immediately after his baptism he retired into the desert, where he fasted forty days and forty nights, and was then tempted by the devil. He who was God could not sin, yet he permitted himself to be tempted, that by his complete victory over the tempter of mankind he might merit for us the grace by which all temptations are overcome. Let us, then, consider—

I. That Jesus fasts forty days and forty nights;
II. That Jesus is tempted three times by Satan, and that he overcomes him.

PART I.

When Jesus had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards he was hungry.

1. *Jesus fasted*—

(*a.*) In order *to atone for the sin of our first parents.* They had in a most sinful manner gratified their desire of eating by tasting the forbidden fruit. By this sin they lost for themselves and their posterity the love of God and his grace, and plunged themselves into the greatest misery. Jesus repaired this sin by his fasting. St. Augustine says: "As the first Adam had forfeited the prerogative of immortality by the indulgence of the palate, so the second Adam was to recover immortality by abstinence."

(*b.*) *To teach us* that we should make use of fasting as a means of penance. Fasting is a means of penance in two respects: *First,* it restrains the anger of God and averts the chastisements which otherwise would fall upon us. Witness the Ninevites.—*Jonas* 3: 5, *etc. Secondly,* it is accepted by Almighty God in lieu and in satisfaction of the temporal punishment due to us for venial sins unrepented of, or for mortal sins after their guilt has been remitted. Like all other good works, fasting, with prayer and almsgiving, quenches for us the fires of purgatory or abridges our sojourn in its flames.

(*c.*) *To show us* by his example that fasting is the principal means of guarding against sin. It wonderfully helps the soul to establish her rightful mastery over the flesh. As the rider guides his steed by means of a bridle, so the Christian controls his sensuality by fasting, subjecting it to the law of God. Hence St. Cyprian says: "Fasting subdues the flesh, crushes the tyranny of the palate, and elevates man. It confines inordinate motions within a grave, binds down extravagant desires, and, united with humility, teaches the servants of God to despise all worldly goods."

2. *Jesus fasted in the desert.* He might have fasted at Bethlehem, at Nazareth, at Jerusalem. Why did he fast in the desert?

(*a.*) *To teach us* that we should do our good works as much as possible in secret, for he who seeks in them human praise has already received his reward. Hence Jesus says: "Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them, otherwise you shall not have a reward from your Father who is in heaven."—*Matt.* 6: 1. Of fasting he says in particular: "When thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face, that thou appear not to men to fast, but to the Father, who is in secret, and thy Father, who seeth in secret will repay thee."—*Matt.* 6: 17, 18.

(*b.*) *To give us* an example that, during this holy season, we should spiritually go into the desert, that is, detach ourselves from earthly things more than at other times, and occupy ourselves with heavenly things. The Church by now forbidding the solemn celebration of marriages, and enjoyments, intimates that we should lead a retired life, and devote ourselves with particular fervor to the exercises of religion, such as prayer, spiritual reading, hearing the word of God, and the reception of the sacraments. Alas! many do not live a holier life during Lent than at other times; they take the same food, and enjoy themselves as usual, exhibiting no more fervor than if it were not Lent. These are not good Christians.

3. *Jesus fasted forty days and forty nights.*

(*a.*) Why does the Evangelist say that Jesus fasted *forty nights?* To distinguish the fast of Jesus from that of the Jews, who fasted only during the day, but ate in the evening. But Jesus kept a rigorous fast during all the time that he remained in the desert, not only by day, but also by night. This was indeed a rigorous but necessary fast for the atonement of our sins, since man sins not only by day, but also by night.

(*b.*) Why did Jesus fast just *forty days?* There is a mysterious meaning in this number. God gave us ten commandments, which are transgressed in a fourfold manner: in thought, deed, word, and omission. This transgression of the ten commandments in a fourfold manner gives the number forty. Christ fasted forty days to give us an example that we should do penance for forty days, because we have sinned in a forty-fold manner. This forty days' fast was prefigured by Moses and Elias, for Moses was upon Mount Sinai forty days without eating or drinking and Elias, after having been miraculously strengthened by the bread of angels, walked forty days and forty nights without eating or drinking, till he reached Mount Horeb.—*Ex.* 24: 18; *III. Kings* 19: 8.

(*c.*) In imitation of the fast of Jesus the Apostles instituted the forty days' fast, and the Church imposes it upon us because it is our duty to imitate, at least to some extent, the example of Jesus, and to deprive ourselves during this time of some meat and drink. St. John Chrysostom says: "Before our divine Saviour underwent the temptations which the devil prepared for him, he fasted forty days, giving an example to all of as, to teach us that by fasting and an austere life we must arm ourselves against the assaults of the devil." We must keep the forty days' fast strictly in order to make satisfation for our sins, to appease God's wrath, and to find mercy and grace before his tribunal.

4. The gospel, in saying that *afterwards he was hungry*, indicates that he was a true man, and therefore experienced hunger, like every other man who eats nothing for some time. By merely human power, however, Jesus could not have fasted forty days and nights, that is, he could not have abstained from all meat and drink, but he wished to support his human nature by his Divinity to enable it to sustain the forty days' fast; the feeling of hunger, however, he would not suppress, as he accepted all other interior and exterior sufferings.

Jesus having, for the love of us, fasted so long, shall we refuse to accept the little difficulties of fasting? Shall we find it too

arduous, during the holy season of Lent, to deprive ourselves of a little foot and drink, and to abstain on Fridays and a few other days from flesh meat? Should we be worthy of the name of *Christian*, if we would not willingly undergo so slight a mortification?

PART II.

1. The devil tempted Jesus to make him fall, if possible, and as all temptations are insinuated into our souls either by pleasure, by honors, or by riches, the devil had the boldness to tempt him by these three enticements.

(*a.*) *By pleasure*, when he said to him: *Command that these stones be made bread.* Jesus was hungry after he had fasted forty days and forty nights. The devil made use of this circumstance to tempt him: *If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.* Satan could have known that Jesus was the Son of God, since St. John the Baptist had publicly confessed him as such.—*John* 1: 34. But as Jesus appeared in great poverty and lowliness the devil still doubted, and to remove his doubt he said: *If thou be the Son of God.* This temptation contained nothing bad in itself, but it would have been humiliating and unbecoming for Jesus to do what the devil suggested, and to work a miracle for the gratification of his desire of eating. Therefore he rejected the enticement, saying: *Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God.* In other words, it is not absolutely necessary for man, in order to preserve life, to have bread or any other kind of food. God is able to preserve life by extraordinary means. Thus he fed the Israelites in the desert with manna for forty years; the Prophet Elias with bread and meat at the torrent of Carith, brought daily by ravens in the morning and in the evening; and on his flight in the desert, with a hearth-cake, which the angel showed him.—*III. Kings* 17: 3-6; 19: 5, 6. Jesus wished to indicate by this answer that we should be more solicitous for the preservation of our supernatural than of our natural life, because the soul is of greater value than the body.

(*b.*) *By pride*, when he suggested to him to throw himself down from the pinnacle of the temple for vain-glory and ostentation, that he might be received by the hands of angels; but Jesus rejected the tempter saying to him: *It is written again, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*

(*c.*) *By riches*, and, in fact, by all temptations, when he showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and promised that he should give him all these, if, falling down,

he would adore him. By this temptation the devil really showed himself to be a devil, a creature who, governed by immeasurable pride, desires nothing more than to put himself in the place of God, and to be adored. Jesus, therefore, with holy indignation, rejected him, saying: *Begone, Satan, for it is written: "The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve."* Seeing himself discovered, the devil, full of confusion and shame, fled; and behold angels came and ministered to him; that is, they brought nourishment, which his humanity needed, and adored him.

2. Here we have some very useful lessons.

(*a.*) *Why did Jesus permit himself to be tempted?* To repair the sin of our first parents, who succumbed to the temptations of the devil. The devil had enticed Adam and Eve by the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life. By the concupiscence of the eyes, when he turned their eyes on the forbidden fruit, and excited in their hearts a liking for this fruit; by the concupiscence of the flesh, when he represented the fruit as very beautiful to the eye and sweet to the taste, so that they longed for it; by the pride of life, representing to them that, by eating it, they would become like God. In the same manner he tempted Jesus by the gratification of the sensual desire of eating, when he suggested to him to make the stones bread; by the pride of life, when he suggested to him to throw himself from the pinnacle of the temple, and thus manifest himself to the whole world as the Son of God; and lastly, by the concupiscence of the eyes, or covetousness, when he promised to give him all the kingdoms of the world as the price of adoration. Thus the temptation of Jesus is most intimately connected with that of our first parents, and what Satan had gained with Adam and Eve he lost again through Jesus.

(*b.*) As Jesus, the Son of God, himself was tempted, no one need be surprised that he is tempted, though he may lead a very holy life. Satan hates men so much that he would destroy them all by one blow if he had the power. He pursues the good generally more than he does the wicked. The latter belong to him already, but he strives to bring the former also under his yoke. Hence we read of many saints having suffered many great and lasting temptations. The devil usually tempts those most vehemently who are really converted. As Pharaoh, when the Israelites had departed from Egypt, pursued them with his whole army, to bring them back into slavery, so the devil is enraged against those souls who by a real conversion have escaped his dominion, and assaults them with all kinds of temptations, to get them into his power. He, therefore, who wishes to serve God and to save

his soul, must be prepared for temptations. He must not, however, be wavering in his confidence, for God suffers no one to be tempted above that which he is able.—*I. Cor.* 10: 13.

(*c.*) The devil tempts us by employing the same enticements as were made use of by him in the case of our first parents and our Saviour, namely sensuality, ambition, and covetousness, or concupiscence of the flesh, concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life. And how many souls fall victims to these three enticements! Who can number the sins which are committed by pleasure, ambition, and covetousness?

(*d.*) Let us learn of Jesus what we are to do, that we may be able to overcome temptation. We must—

1. *Go into the desert*; that is, we must love solitude, lead a retired life, and shun the proximate occasion of sin.

2. *Fast*, that is, not only keep the appointed fast-days, but, in general, live piously and soberly. For as intemperance in eating and drinking is the cause of many sins, so the mortification of the sensual appetite by means of sobriety is an excellent preventive against the enticements to sin, especially against impurity.

3. *Pray*, that we may obtain of God light and strength to overcome the temptations: Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptations."—*Mark* 14: 38.

4. *Keep in mind the word of God;* for example, when we are tempted to pride: "Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled" (Luke 14: 11); to impurity: "Neither fornicators nor adulterers shall possess the kingdom of God" (*I. Cor.* 6: 9, 10); to covetousness: "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?"—*Matt.* 16: 26.

5. *Banish the temptations at once.* A spark that falls on the hand will not burn and wound you if you fling it away at once, but if you leave it on the hand even a few moments it will burn and pain you. Thus it is with temptations. You must not parley with them, but banish them at once. The brothers of St. Thomas of Aquin sent a female into his room to tempt him, but he took hold of a burning piece of wood and drove her away.

PERORATION.

The gospel of this day concludes with the words: *And, behold, angels came and ministered to him.* Behold the reward that awaits

you, if you fight against all temptations and overcome them; the holy angels, especially your guardian angel, will look down upon you with pleasure, and protect you with increased solicitude. And how happily you will die if you can honestly say of yourselves that you have fought the good fight! The angels of God will protect you in the last decisive battle against the final assaults, and lead your souls into the joys of eternal life. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

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3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

THE ASSAULTS OF SATAN AND THE MEANS OF RENDERING THEM INEFFECTUAL.

Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil. —*Matt.* 4: 1.

The devil had the temerity to tempt our Lord three times, in order to induce him to sin and to make void the work of our Redemption. Let us, therefore, not wonder if he tempts us, and day and night lies in wait for our destruction. He knows that we are called to occupy the place in heaven which he lost by his pride; therefore he greatly envies us, and uses all his exertions to deprive us of heaven. St. Thomas of Aquin says: "The envy which the devil feels when he thinks of a creature formed of the earth occupying his place in heaven and enjoying the sight of God, burns him more than the sulphurous flames of hell." Hence St. Peter compares him to a roaring lion, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour."—*I. Peter* 5: 8. I intend to speak to-day of the assaults of Satan and the means of rendering them ineffectual, by answering the two following questions:

I. How does the evil spirit pursue us?
II. What must we do to render his assaults ineffectual?

PART I.

The evil spirit endeavors *to render men unhappy for time and eternity.*

1. *For time.*

(*a.*) *By operating upon them outwardly and endeavoring to injure them in their goods and possessions, in their bodies and lives.*

Examples from Holy Writ: Job. The devil robbed him of everything he possessed, and smote him with a terrible disease, which caused him intolerable pain. In the gospel we read of a woman who had *a spirit* of infirmity eighteen years; she was bent down and could not look upwards at all. Jesus healed her. —*Luke* 13: 11-13. Again, we read that the devil made a man deaf and dumb; that the evil spirits, whom Jesus cast out of two that were possessed, went into a herd of swine and the whole ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.—*Matt.* 8: 28-32.

(*b.*) *By taking bodily possession* of people, and producing in them all kinds of preternatural and horrible delusions, such as melancholy, and various corporal infirmities. People who are in such a way taken possession of by evil spirits, are called *possessed* by the devil. That persons may be thus possessed, the Sacred Scripture proves in many places: *Mark* 5: 1-13; *Luke* 11: 14. The gospel frequently speaks of Jesus having cast out devils. Thus we read in St. Matthew's gospel (8: 16: "And when evening was come, they brought to him many that were possessed with devils; and he cast out the spirit with his word; and all that were sick he healed." By the possessed with devils we do not understand sick persons afflicted with natural evils, for the gospel clearly distinguished between the two, saying that Jesus *cast out* the spirit, and all that were sick he *healed.* Moreover, we read that the evil spirits spoke from within the persons possessed; that they went out from them, and went elsewhere—in short, that they acted as rational creatures. These things are quite inconsistent with the supposition that possession meant only some form of natural sickness.

The holy Fathers unanimously teach that the devil can take possession of the body of man, and in Church history and the Lives of the Saints there are found so many examples of devils being cast out, that we should reject historical facts, were we to call in question the possibility of possession, or deny that such had ever actually occurred. It is true, there are not so many possessed by the devil under the New Law as there were under the Old, because Christ subdued the power of the devil; but there always have been persons possessed, and there will be such to the end of the world, because only then will Satan lose all his power.

Satan may operate upon man from the outside, or take possession of the body; still he has only so much power over him as

God allows; without the will of God he can not hurt a hair of his head. But God sometimes gives him power over men, either to punish them for their sins, as was the case with the seven husbands of Sara (*Tob.* 6), or to try them and give them an opportunity of practicing patience and other virtues. Example: Job, etc.

2. *For eternity.*

(*a.*) *The whole endeavor of the devil is to cause man to lose his soul.* With this object he tempts him and uses all exertions to lead him astray, to keep him in sin, and to ruin him. We can not doubt this truth for a moment, since we find numberless proofs of it in Scripture and Tradition. Our first parents sinned, having been tempted by the devil.—*Gen.* 3. It was the devil that put it in the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus.—*John* 13: 2. It was the devil that tempted Ananias to tell a lie to the Holy Ghost and to keep part of the price of the land sold.—*Acts* 5: 3. It was the devil that had the audacity to tempt even Jesus. All men, but especially the pious, are subject to these temptations of Satan. St. Paul, who was rapt into the third heaven, says of himself that an angel of Satan buffeted him, that is, tempted him, for which thing he thrice besought the Lord, that it might depart from him.—*II. Cor.* 12: 7, 8. In the Lives of the Saints we read that the devil in many ways tempted them, and employed every possible artifice and stratagem to make them fall. The devil is a subtle enemy; he does not trouble himself much with sinners who are already in his snares, but he employs all weapons against the fervent servants of God, and does all he can to bring them under his dominion. St. Francis of Sales says: "The dogs do not attack those of the household, but only strangers; thus the devil does not vehemently assault those who are already his. If, therefore, he seek one, it is a sign that he does not yet belong to him, and the greater the virtue of the person, the more vehement the assaults he may expect from the devil."

(*b.*) *The devil tries various plans.* He endeavors to spread false maxims and errors in the world; wherefore Jesus calls him an enemy, who, while men were asleep, oversowed cockle among the wheat.—*Matt.* 13: 25, 28. He tries to take our good resolutions out of our hearts, that we may not carry them out, as Jesus assures us.—*Luke* 8: 12. Moreover, he operates on the external senses of man, producing in him various images, motions, and inclinations, which often become the cause of violent temptations; he uses the particular circumstances and inclinations of men to tempt them and entice them to evil. He flatters the young, and paints the joys and enjoyments of the world in the

most beautiful colors; he makes old people believe that they will live a long while yet, and therefore have plenty of time to work out their salvation; he entices the vain to pride, the avaricious to covetousness, the unchaste to voluptuousness, the irascible to revenge; in a word, he assaults every one in his most vulnerable spot and where he can overcome him with the least difficulty.

I must, however, here remark that not all temptations come from the devil. There are other sources of temptation—namely, our own concupiscence and inclination to evil, as St. James says: "Every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away, and allured,"—*James* 1: 14; then the world with its illusions, scandals, and bad examples, as St. John says: "All that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life."—*I. John* 2: 16.

PART II.

To render the assaults of the devil ineffectual we must—

1. *Pray.*

(*a.*) Christ himself says: "Watch ye and pray, that you enter not into temptation."—*Matt.* 26: 41. By prayer we obtain the grace of God, by which we can overcome even the most violent temptations. What power prayer has against the devil, the history of young Tobias teaches us. He was to take Sara, Raguel's daughter, to wife. Now, Sara was possessed by an evil spirit, who had already killed seven husbands to whom she had been married, one after the other, on account of incontinence. Raguel feared the same fate for Tobias, and therefore hesitated to give him Sara to wife. But Sara and Tobias had recourse to prayer, and persevered in it for three days, and behold, the evil spirit could not injure them.—*Tob.* 8. We have, therefore, an easy means of rendering the assaults and temptations of the devil ineffectual, viz., prayer. St. John Chrysostom says: "The roaring of the lion does not drive away wild beasts as much as prayer does the evil spirits."

(*b.*) It matters little what prayers we say in time of temptation; every prayer is good, if said with humility, devotion, and confidence.

Very effectual against the attacks of the devil are—

First, *the sign of the cross.* St. Chrysostom says: "We vehemently tremble when we behold places where malefactors were

executed; how terrified must the devil be when he beholds the cross, that weapon which mortally wounded him. The evil spirits scarcely get the first glimpse of this sign, when, full of fear, and trembling, they take to flight."

Secondly, *the invocation of the holy name of Jesus.* "In my name they shall cast out devils."—*Mark* 16: 17. Numberless Christians have been freed by the invocation of the holy name of Jesus, not only from temporal evils caused by the devil, but also from his temptations. "The power of Christ is so great that the evil spirits sink back into nothingness before it, and can not even stand before the invocation of the name of Jesus."—*St. Athanasius.*

Thirdly, *the use of holy water.* St. Teresa says: "To banish evil spirits so that they will not return, there is nothing more effectual than holy water." There must be great virtue, then, in holy water. She adds: "It is no vain imagination; I have often experienced it." A missionary priest in China mentions it as a well-known fact that possessed persons, of whom there are many among the Gentiles, by sprinkling holy water are usually freed from evil spirits.

2. *We must resist earnestly.*

(*a.*) There is a great difference between the attacks of the devil and those of a man. If a man who is our superior in strategy and strength attack us, our resistance is useless, and we shall be overcome. But if the devil assaults us, it is in our power to overcome him, notwithstanding his power and subtlety, for it is not we alone who fight, but Almighty God who fights in us and with us, and helps us on to victory. In view of this divine succor, the Apostle says: "I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me." —*Phil.* 4: 13. Example: St. Justina, having become a Christian, vowed her virginity to God. Aglaides, a Pagan youth, wished to espouse her, but she rejected the offer. The youth tried promises and flatteries, but all in vain. He went to a sorcerer in order to conquer Justina with the help of the evil one. The sorcerer conjured the powers of darkness, and Justina was obliged to endure the most violent temptations day and night; but she earnestly resisted, prayed, fasted, and invoked Jesus and Mary for protection and help, signed herself with the sign of the cross, and, behold, the temptation ceased. The devil told the sorcerer that Justina was a Christian, and that he had no power over Christians who courageously fight and confide in the Lord. The sorcerer (Cyprian) became a Christian, and obtained with Justina the crown of martyrdom.

(*b.*) It is therefore groundless for some to lay their sins exclusively to the charge of the devil, and say: "It was the devil made me do this or that." If they had not listened to the devil, he could not have allured them to sin. "The devil is like a chained dog," says St. Augustine, "he can bite no one unless he imprudently goes near him. Yes, he may growl, show his teeth, and snarl, but he can not bite us, for he can not go beyond the length of his chain. Show him the cross, and he will fly back into his fiery kennel in hell." And again St. Augustine says: "As the old enemy is strong when dealing with those who assent to him, so he is weak against those who resist him. If you consent to his suggestions, you can no more tame him than a lion, but if you resist him, you can trample upon him as upon an ant."

PERORATION.

Make use of those two means, and the devil can do you no harm. *Pray.* As soon as you perceive a temptation within you, act like little children, who, when they see a wild beast, run to their father and mother, or at least cry for help; therefore, go to God in your temptations, and ask his help, grace, and mercy. *Make the sign of the cross frequently, invoke the Holy Name of Jesus, sprinkle yourselves with holy water, and recommend yourselves to the protection of the Blessed Virgin, the angels and saints.* Avoid every kind of sin, but especially impurity, cursing and blaspheming; and live piously, for over pious Christians the devil has no power; at all events he cannot injure them as regards their salvation. If you perceive any temptation, resist manfully, and repeatedly say to yourselves, "Lord, I would rather die than sin." If you follow these rules, you will be able to persevere in the grace of God, and as conquerors over all the enemies of your salvation, you will receive hereafter the crown of victory. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

THE BLESSING AND DISTRIBUTION OF ASHES AS AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HOLY SEASON OF LENT.

When he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards he was hungry.—Matt. 4: 2.

The Church begins the holy season of Lent by blessing ashes and putting them on the foreheads of the faithful. From this act Ash Wednesday has its name. The blessing of the ashes begins with an antiphon and a verse of a psalm, in which the mercy and grace of God are implored. After that come four prayers, which express the signification of the blessing of the ashes. The ashes are to become a remedy for all who penitently confess their sins; they are to procure for those on whose heads they are put the pardon of all their sins and the reward which is promised to the penitent; they are, moreover, to fill all with the spirit of compunction, and to give us courage and strength, like the Ninevites, zealously to do penance. After these prayers the ashes are sprinkled with holy water and incensed. After the blessing of the ashes, the priest first puts some of them on his own head and then on the foreheads of those present, after which he says another prayer for protection in the forthcoming spiritual combat. I shall speak to-day of the distribution of the ashes, by which the Church introduces the forty days' fast, and explain to you how the ceremony of Ash Wednesday is—

I. A symbol of penance;
II. An exhortation to penance.

PART I.

1. Ashes are in themselves a symbol of penance. The color of the ashes reminds us of this, for dark gray is the color of penance. The ashes, moreover, have a cleansing property and are used for cleansing soiled clothes. In like manner penance cleanses our heart and washes away the sins with which it is contaminated. Ashes strewed on a field are a good fertilizer; they fructify gardens and meadows, and make the plants grow rapidly. So also penance causes us to grow in virtue and bring forth the fruits of justice.

2. *Ashes were under the Old Law a figure of penance.*

(*a.*) When Jonas announced to the Ninevites the destruction of their city, "they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth from greatest to the least, and sat *in ashes*."—*Jon.* 3: 4-6.

(*b.*) King David says of himself: "I did eat ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping."—*Ps.* 101: 10. He mingled his bread with ashes or put ashes on his bread, that he might even at his meals be reminded of his sins, and, consequently, of the necessity of doing penance for them.

(*c.*) Thamar, David's daughter, after her disgrace, "put ashes on her head and went on crying."—*II. Kings* 13: 19. We read the same of Job (42: 6), of the widow Judith (9: 1), of Mardochai (*Esth.* 4: 1), and many others.

(*d.*) When Jeremias the Prophet, in the name of God, announced to the Jews that great chastisements should come upon them, he commanded them to put ashes on their heads: "Howl, ye shepherds, and cry; and sprinkle yourselves *with ashes*, ye leaders of the flock; for the days of your slaughter and your dispersion are accomplished, and you shall fall like precious vessels."—*Jerem.* 25: 34.

3. *We also find ashes to be a figure of penance under the New Law.*

(*a.*) As Church history proves, in the earliest times ashes were put on the heads of public sinners. All those who had the misfortune to sin grievously and who wished to recover the grace of reconciliation, asked for a public penance on Ash Wednesday. With this intention, they appeared barefooted and in mourning garments in the church; weeping and wailing they most humbly asked pardon of the bishop, who then clothed them in penitential garments, put ashes on their heads, sprinkled them with holy water and with the clergy said over them the Penitential Psalms and the Litany of the Saints. Then he delivered an address to them, in which, with impressive words, he exhorted them to penance, and, in procession, led them out of the church, saying to them in tears: "Behold, you are rejected to-day from the threshold of the Church, your holy mother, because of your sins and vices, as Adam, the first man, was cast out of paradise, because of his transgressions." Standing upon the threshold of the church, he finally exhorted them not to despair of the divine mercy, but by fasting, prayer, pilgrimages, alms, and other good works, to make themselves worthy to be received into the Church again on Holy Thursday. Thereupon they at once commenced the

most rigorous exercises of penance, in order again to become participants of the grace of reconciliation.

(*b.*) This public penance afterwards became obsolete, but the custom of putting ashes on the head was retained. Even when only public sinners were sprinkled with ashes, as a matter of course other Christians were usually present, who from a motive of humility and devotion had ashes put on their heads also. In the year 1091, the Council of Benevento decreed that the ashes should be distributed to all, that all might the more emphatically be reminded of the necessity of penance. Since that time the custom of putting ashes on the head has existed throughout the whole Catholic Church, and there is now no parish church in which ashes are not blessed and put on the foreheads of the faithful. Owing to this ceremony the first day of the forty days' fast is called Ash Wednesday.

The ceremony is certainly very proper for us all. We are all sinners. We all stand in need of God's mercy and forgiveness. "Unless you do penance you shall all likewise perish." Unless we do penance, we too shall perish. Expressive of this idea is the ordinance of Ash Wednesday. Kneeling to receive the ashes, we profess ourselves sinners indeed, but by God's mercy contrite sinners, hoping to obtain pardon from him who will never despise or desert a humble and contrite heart.

PART II.

The distribution of ashes is also an exhortation to penance. This will become manifest to us, if we consider—

1. *Whence the ashes come.* These ashes are procured by burning the *palms* blessed on the Palm Sunday of the previous year, and which were carried in the procession.

(*a.*) Why are the ashes of the palm-branches used? The palm is an emblem of peace, which one enjoys after combats and victories. Thus the inhabitants of Jerusalem saluted Jesus at his entrance into the city as King of Peace, carrying palms in their hands. The saints in heaven are represented with palms in their hands, to signify that, after their combats and victories here below, they now enjoy peace in heaven. In the ecclesiastical sense, therefore, the palms indicate eternal rest or felicity in heaven. The palms, reduced to ashes, remind us, then, that by sin heaven was lost for us, and that we can no more acquire it by our natural powers than it is naturally possible for palms burnt to ashes to become verdant again and grow. What an appalling truth! The palms burnt to ashes are, however, not entirely destroyed—the

ashes are left. So we, although sinners and deprived of grace, are not irretrievably lost like the fallen angels; we have a Redeemer, and through his merits can look up to God with confidence; and restored to grace by penance we can hope by God's mercy to persevere to the end and at last secure the felicity of heaven.

(*b.*) The ashes are from the blessed palms with which we went to meet our divine Saviour on Palm Sunday in solemn procession. We are reminded of Jesus, whom we behold no longer at a distance, as did the people under the Old Law, for he has already accomplished the work of our Redemption, and remains always in our midst, giving grace, giving peace and promise of victory.

2. *What the ashes are.* They are what remains of burnt things —a figure of the vanity and nothingness of all temporal goods and pleasures. St. Augustine says: "The fish nibbles at the hook and devours with joy what it gets from the bait as long as it does not notice the hook; but as soon as the fisherman pulls in the line, it finds itself captured, and by its motions in the water exhibits no longer the joy it did before. So it is with men in regard to this world. They enjoy the goods which it holds out as a bait to them, and imagine themselves happy; but this happiness does not last long; then they feel nothing but pain and remorse in thinking about those things which they enjoyed, and to which they remained attached. Witness Solomon, who, in all that he possessed and enjoyed, found nothing but vanity and affliction of spirit. The priest, by putting ashes on our foreheads, reminds us of the vanity and frailty of all earthly things, and exhorts us to be solicitous for our immortal souls.

3. *How the ashes are distributed.* (*a.*) They are put on the head, in which pride has its seat, therefore we say of a proud man: "He carries his head high". Nothing is more opposed to penance than pride. Witness, the proud Pharisee and the humble Publican. The Church, by putting ashes on our heads, tells us that we have no reason to be proud, since we are nothing but dust and ashes.

(*b.*) The ashes are put on *in the form of a cross.* The sign of the cross reminds us of Jesus Crucified, and consequently of the important truth that we can do penance and escape eternal death only through the merits of Jesus Christ. The putting on of ashes in the form of a cross is an exhortation to penance, for if Jesus died on the cross for the atonement of our sins, ought we to think it arduous to undergo the austerities of penance in order to appease God?

4. Lastly, the priest, whilst putting the ashes on the faithful, says: "Remember, man, that thou art dust, and into dust thou

shalt return." To whom should these words not be an earnest admonition to penance? If the sinner would think of death and the terrible lot that awaits him after death, it would be impossible for him to continue in impenitence; his conscience would be aroused and give him no rest till he breaks the fetters of sin and is converted. "In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin."—*Ecclus.* 7: 40. "Descend frequently in thought into your grave, that you may turn your eyes from vanity, and beware of offending God. By this simple and easy means you will be acquiring every day an immortal crown of glory in heaven."—*St. Ambrose.*

PERORATION.

The blessing and distribution of the ashes, then, with which Lent begins, is in effect a very proper and salutary ordinance of Holy Church, for it is not only a symbol of penance, but also an admonition to penance. I only wish that you would put into practice what its signifies, and what it silently but forcibly exhorts you to do, so that during the forty days' fast you may bring forth fruits worthy of penance. Renounce sin, do penance, live piously and soberly, that you may be reconciled with God, according to the word of the Prophet: "If the wicked do penance for all his sins which he hath committed, and keep all my commandments, and do judgment and justice, living he shall live, and shall not die."—*Ezech.* 18: 21. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

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5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

WHAT WEAPONS WE MUST USE TO OVERCOME SATAN.

Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. *Matt.* 4: 1.

Armed with three weapons, viz., a sword, a spear, and a shield Goliath the giant advanced from the ranks of the Philistines, and challenged for forty consecutive days any man of the armies of Israel to fight him.—*I Kings* 17: 16. With three weapons does the infernal Goliath, the devil, attack man, and these

weapons are *pleasure, pride,* and *riches,* or "the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life."—*I. John* 2 : 16.

With these three weapons he attacked our first parents in Paradise, *and conquered them;* with these three weapons, four thousand years later, he attacked Jesus, *and was conquered by him.*

The devil remains always the same: the weapons which he used in the combat with our first parents and with Christ he makes use of against us to make us fall. The question now is: What weapons must we use to overcome Satan? This question I will answer for you to-day. I say—

I. If Satan tempt you to PLEASURE, *fight against him by* FASTING.

II. If he tempt you to COVETOUSNESS, *fight against him by* ALMS.

III. If he tempt you to PRIDE, *fight against him by* PRAYER.

PART I.

1. If the devil tempt you to pleasure.

(*a.*) By pleasure I understand the predominant desire of man after that which appears pleasing to his sensual nature, be it lawful or unlawful. To the latter class belong especially the sins against holy purity, to which every human being is more or less tempted. Not only those who are little solicitous about the welfare of their soul, but also fervent servants of God, frequently have hard battles to fight against the spirit of impurity, and are never entirely secure against his attacks. How piously did St. Benedict, St. Jerome, St. Anthony, St. Francis live, and yet they were obliged to endure not a few impure temptations. St. Paul even, who was rapt into the third heaven, complains that there was given him a sting of the flesh.—*II. Cor.* 12: 7.

(*b.*) Need we wonder, then, that the vice of impurity was prevalent in the world from the beginning, and caused great and wide-spread moral devastation? Examples: The people in Noe's time and their destruction by the deluge. The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrha. The vice of voluptuousness among the Gentiles was raised to the dignity of a religious practice. What is the condition of things among Christians now-a-days? The unripe youth, the mature and the aged are addicted to the vice of impurity. Pure, chaste, virginal souls—how rare they are!

(c.) And yet nothing is more necessary for a Christian who wishes to save his soul than chastity according to his state of life. Those who observe it not, whether single or married, will be damned. "Do not err; neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor

the effeminate .... shall possess the kingdom of God."—*I. Cor.* 6: 9, 10.

2. *Fight against him by fasting.* (*a.*) It can not be denied that the unrestrained use of meat and drink is the cause of many carnal temptations. The body which is fed well resembles a wild horse which kicks, bites, and even runs away with a skilful rider. Christians who overcharge their bodies with food and drink are little disposed for prayer and other pious exercises; it is therefore an easy task for the devil to tempt them and make them fall. But he who subdues his appetite by fasting, gives the spirit the dominion over the animal propensities, and is able to repel the assaults of the unclean spirit by prayer and other spiritual exercises. St. Cyprian says: "By fasting the filth of vice dries up, lustfulness languishes, evil desires are weakened, voluptuousness flies, and the heat of Ætna is extinguished." A young man once complained to an aged religious that he was troubled very much by impure temptations. The religious replied that he was never much troubled with them. On asking what means he used, the old man replied: "I never indulge my hunger and thirst to satiety, and thus it comes to pass that an impure temptation hardly ever molests me; for I bring the flesh under the subjection of the spirit by mortification."

(*b.*) You also must employ this weapon by observing the ecclesiastical precept of fasting during Lent. Abstain from flesh meat on the days on which its use is forbidden. He who is not so far master over his sensuality as to be able to abstain from flesh meat for a few days can not be expected to overcome impure temptations and live chastely. Be sparing in eating and drinking. All the days in Lent, except Sundays, are fast days, on which only one meal is allowed with a moderate collation in the evening, nothing being permitted between meals. Hard work, bodily infirmity and old age admit of exceptions. Live piously and soberly, that you may tame the concupiscence of the flesh and preserve that virtue so necessary—the virtue of purity.

PART II.

1. If the devil tempt you to covetousness.

(*a.*) We may possess temporal goods, and employ diligence and care in keeping and increasing them, but we must not set our hearts and affections upon them, nor love them as we should love only God and our own immortal souls. We must also in the acquisition of them avoid all injustice, and willingly give of our abundance to the poor. He who violates these precepts is in

danger of losing his soul. "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.—*Matt.* 19: 24. "They that will become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition."—*I. Tim.* 6 : 9.

(*b.*) Covetousness is a widely-spread vice, and to it many a lost soul at this moment in hell may attribute its irreparable and everlasting ruin. A spiritual writer says: "There are three vices which plunge man into perdition: *pride, voluptuousness,* and *covetousness;* so that, by the Sacrament of Penance, out of a hundred proud persons about fifty are saved; out of a hundred voluptuous, about thirty; but out of a hundred of the covetous scarcely three are saved; and this because for the covetous an essential part of the penance consists in restitution, which is very arduous for man." Aripart, King of the Lombards, when dissatisfaction broke out in his army, wished to flee into France. For this purpose he took from the public treasury as much gold as he could carry, and fled at night. He was obliged to swim the river Tessino, but the great quantity of gold which he carried frustrated all his exertions, the weight of the precious metal dragged him to the bottom, and he met his death in the water. Thus he who lets his heart cling to gold and the temporal goods of this world, is drawn into the abyss of hell.

A few years ago the "Britannia," which had on board a large consignment of Spanish dollars, was wrecked off the coast of Brazil. In the hope of saving some of them several barrels were brought on deck, but the vessel was fast going to pieces, so that the only way to save life was to take at once to the boats. The last boat was about to shove off, when a young midshipman went back to see if any one was still on board. To his surprise, there was a man on deck with a hatchet in his hand, with which he had broken open several of the casks, the contents of which he was heaping up about him. "What are you doing here?" shouted the youth. "Don't you know that the ship is fast going to pieces?" "The ship may go," said the man, "I have been poor all my life, but I am determined to die rich." The officer's remonstrances were answered by another flourish of the hatchet, and the man was left to his fate. We should consider such a person a madman, were it not that he has too many imitators who seem determined at all hazards to die rich. Least of all risks do they consider that of losing their soul at any moment during the frantic struggle.

2. *Fight against him by alms.* (*a.*) The strongest weapon against covetousness is *liberality.* St. Chrysostom remarks very appro-

priately: "If wild animals are confined and kept in a dark place, they become more furious and intractable; but if you let them out, and accustom them to the sight of men, they lose their innate ferocity, and become as tame as sheep." So it is with riches. If money be hoarded up, it is dangerous, like a lion. But if you take it out of the dark place, your purse, and distribute it among the poor it will no longer be dangerous, but will become your protector and intercessor. Thus it is. The more you hoard money and the more you guard against spending it, the more the love of it grows upon you: but the more liberal and charitable you are towards the poor, the more the love of money disappears, and the vice of covetousness finds no resting-place in the heart. "The desire of money is the root of all evil."—*I. Tim.* 6: 10.

(*b.*) With this weapon you must fight in the holy season of Lent. The Church during this holy season of penance prescribes abstinence from costly meats and drinks. By a conscientious observance of this ecclesiastical precept you will save something which you ought to give to the poor. Guard your hearts against the vice of avarice, and practice the virtue of liberality, which is so acceptable to God. "Redeem your sins by works of mercy to the poor."

PART III.

1. If the devil tempt you to pride.

(*a.*) Nothing is more odious to God than *pride*. "Pride is hateful before God and men. Pride is the beginning of all sin; he that holdeth it, shall be filled with maledictions; and it shall ruin him in the end."—*Ecclus.* 10: 7, 15. Witness the rebellions angels, our first parents in Paradise, and the Scribes and Pharisees in the days of Christ.

(*b.*) Pride is a sin from which only few souls are entirely free. Most people attribute the good which they do and have, not to God, but to themselves; they seek the praise and applause of the world, become dejected and indignant when they meet with humiliations, think themselves better than others, and desire everywhere to be preferred before others.

(*c.*) Although pride is not always a mortal sin, yet it brings many evils in its train; it takes all the merits from our good works, deprives us of many graces, leads to many sins, and prevents all progress in the way of virtue. If it once take deep root in the heart it removes us further and further from God, leads us into the worst vices, and finally causes our eternal perdition.

2. *Fight against him by prayer.*

(*a.*) Prayer is one of the principal means of defense against every temptation, especially the temptation to pride. When we open our lips to pray, it is an exercise of humility, for to pray means in reality nothing else than to acknowledge that we are nothing, that we can not help ourselves, and that for this reason we turn to God, that he may give us what we need. The devil can not pray, because of his pride. He has not a particle of humility. Moreover, prayer is the key to the heart of God, by which we can obtain all goods and graces, and consequently humility. "Amen, Amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you."—*John* 16: 23.

(*b.*) As often as the devil allures you to pride, have recourse to prayer; with this weapon you will overcome his attacks, and preserve the virtue of humility, which it so necessary. Pray and meditate. Call to mind all the humiliations which our Lord endured in his passion and death. Consider how he was apprehended, dragged like a malefactor from one tribunal to another, derided as a fool; how a robber, a murderer, was preferred before him, and how he was crucified between two thieves. Such a consideration will be salutary to you, for you will learn of Jesus to be meek and humble of heart.

PERORATION.

"All that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life." Christ overcame the world with its concupiscences; he obtained a complete victory over sensuality, pride, and covetousness. Let us follow him; let us use the weapons which the Church offers us during this holy season to help us in our combat. Let us fast, that we may render ourselves capable of subduing our impure desires and of serving God in purity of body and soul. Let us give alms, that we may preserve our hearts from all covetousness. Let us pray and meditate, that we may overcome pride and remain humble. If we fight against Satan by fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, we shall, by the aid of God's grace, overcome all the enemies of our salvation, and obtain the crown of victory, which is life everlasting. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

6. MORAL SKETCH.

THE DUTY AND VALUE OF FASTING.

When he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards he was hungry.—Matt. 4: 2.

The holy season of Lent, during which we are to undertake various penitential exercises, mortifying in particular the craving of the palate by fasting, has come round once more. But how little is the precept of fasting observed! The freethinker derides this precept; the sinner, who has much reason to afflict his soul, thinks himself exempt from this obligation; the lukewarm Christian frames excuses in order to exonerate himself from this imaginary burden. Many excuse themselves on account of bodily infirmity; many under the pretext of hard work. Many from a want of conscientiousness disregard the precept of fasting altogether and yield to their immoderate longing after enjoyments, eating without restraint what is forbidden, to the great scandal of others.

How does it come that so many Christians disregard the obligation of fasting? Because they are not convinced of the obligation and the value of fasting. I shall speak to-day about—

I. The obligation, and
II. The value of fasting.

PART I.

Are we obliged to fast? Yes.

1. *The example of Jesus obliges us.*

(*a.*) Jesus went into the desert and fasted forty days and forty nights, abstaining altogether from meat and drink. Do not imagine that Jesus did not experience the bitterness of fasting in his body, for as man he felt the necessity of eating and drinking like any other man, and the Evangelist expressly says, *He was hungry.* It was not necessary for him to fast; he could have appeased his hunger at any moment by a miracle, because he was Almighty. Moreover, he did not fast to expiate his sins, for he was

holiness itself. He fasted only for our sake; he fasted in order to leave us an example and to apply the merits of his fast to us. It is written, says St. Ambrose, "He that professes to belong to Christ must walk as he walked. If therefore you claim to be a Christian you must do in your weakness what he did in his perfection; he, who was without sin, fasted forty days; and you, who have grievously sinned, refuse to spend forty days in penance. He fasted for *our* sins, not for *his*, and you, Christians, will not fast for your own sins! How can your conscience be quiet? How can you call yourselves Christians, if you satiate yourselves when Jesus was hungry for your sake?"

(*b.*) Jesus is our model and pattern; according to him we must regulate ourselves, if we wish to work out our salvation and be saved. "Whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren."—*Rom.* 8: 29. What conformity should we have to Jesus, if, instead of mortifying ourselves, subduing our sensuality, and fasting, we know nothing of self-denial and gratify the craving of the palate in every possible way? And if we have no conformity to Christ, how can we be saved?

2. *The Church obliges us to fast.*

(*a.*) Christ said: "The days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they shall fast."—*Matt.* 9: 15. Mindful of this prediction of their divine Master, and the example which he himself had given by his forty days' fast, the Apostles undoubtedly practiced this fast themselves, and urgently recommended it to the believers. Therefore many holy Fathers call the forty days' fast an apostolic tradition and ordinance. St. Jerome says: "We fast forty days according to apostolic tradition." Leo the Great says: "Let the apostolic ordinance of a forty days' fast be strictly observed." This ordinance of the forty days' fast is a most venerable one, coming down to us through the centuries, hallowed by the observance and approval of all the Fathers and Saints of the Church. Lukewarm is the Christian, and weak his faith, and slight his reverence for Holy Church and her sacred traditions, if he will not cheerfully comply with the Lenten regulations.

(*b.*) In the primitive ages of Christianity the forty days' fast, though not commanded under the penalty of sin, but only recommended, was observed in a very rigorous manner by the faithful. Their fervor rendered a precept superfluous. What kind of Christians should we be, if in this holy season we de-

clined to deprive ourselves of some meat and drink, when fasting is not only a counsel, but also a strict precept?

(*c.*) When, in the course of time, this Christian fervor began to decrease more and more, the Church saw herself under the necessity of prescribing the forty days' fast as a precept. This was done in the fourth century, for St. Ambrose says: "During the rest of the year fasting is a virtue and deserves special reward, but not to fast during Lent is a mortal sin. In one case it is voluntary, in the other necessary; the free will resolves to do it in one case, but a most holy precept commands it in the other." This law, though greatly moderated, is in force to-day, and the Church every year inculcates it on the faithful. Those who do not keep the forty days' fast evidently sin grievously against a precept of strict obligation.

(*d.*) But some say: As fasting is only an ecclesiastical law it is not so binding as the commandments. What an error! The Church is God's representative upon earth, and disobedience to her is nothing less than disobedience to God, for Christ says: "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me."—*Luke* 10: 16. He that disregards the precept of fasting and boldly transgresses it, shows that he despises Christ and the Father, the heavenly Father, and to him the words of Jesus apply: "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican."—*Matt.* 18: 17.

3. *We are obliged to fast in order to prepare worthily for the celebration of Easter.*

(*a.*) Easter is the annual celebration in memory of the accomplishment of the work of our Redemption. We must prepare ourselves for it, in order to apply to ourselves the fruit of Redemption. The preparation consists particularly in extirpating our bad habits and passions, changing our perverse will and amending our lives. But what can be better adapted for this than a penitential fast by which the rebellious flesh is subdued, fuel taken from the concupiscence that burns within us, the spirit encouraged to wholesome meditations, and the heart moved to repentance! The Church therefore prescribes a forty days' fast, that all Christians, by true repentance, may be spiritually renewed, and by a total conversion prepared for a worthy reception of the holy sacraments.

(*b.*) The most ancient Fathers of the Church looked upon the Lenten fast as a preparation for the worthy celebration of the

Easter festival and for the reception by all the faithful of the Most Holy Sacrament, as was the custom on that feast. St. Augustine says: "That we may receive more worthily the sacraments of Redemption, we prepare ourselves by a salutary forty days' fast." Leo the Great says: "Since at no other time the spirit of perdition rages more violently against the members of Jesus than when they are to celebrate the holiest of mysteries, the ordinance of the Holy Ghost very appropriately warned the Christian people that during forty days, by penitential mortifications, they should prepare themselves for the celebration of Easter. He that does not observe the precept of the forty days' fast lacks the Christian spirit and can not be expected to prepare himself for Easter and receive the holy sacrament with advantage."

PART II.

Fasting is of great value, for thereby—

1. *We make satisfaction to God for sins committed, and avert the punishment due to them.*

Every sin deserves punishment before God, the Judge and Avenger of all evil. But if we chastise ourselves, we stay the hand of God's avenging justice. "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged."—*I. Cor.* 11: 31. Such a judgment of ourselves is the self-chastisement or penance inflicted on our bodies by fasting, and by this self-condemnation of ourselves for sins committed the divine punishment is averted. Witness the Ninevites, whose city was to be destroyed in forty days, but was spared on account of their repentance and fasting. "God had mercy with regard to the evil which he had said that he would do to them, and he did it not."—*Jon.* 3: 10. So with us. By fasting it is in our power to avert God's wrath. And as no one can glory in being without sin, so no one who is able should let this salutary means for the expiation of the temporal punishments due to sin pass unprofitably to himself.

2. *We protect ourselves from sin.*

(*a.*) St. Paul says: "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh."—*Gal.* 5: 17. There is an incessant warfare going on between the higher and nobler faculties of the human soul and the lower and inferior animal propensities. And just as a prudent general tries to cut off from the enemy his source of supplies, to weaken him thereby and make him surrender, so the spirit should weaken the flesh, that source of all ammunition and supplies in the spiritual warfare. This it can do by a temporary withdrawal of its wonted nourishment from the

body, that the spirit may more easily overcome this, its sworn enemy. St. Augustine says: "If you had a too spirited horse, that might throw you off, would you not deprive him of some of his food, in order to tame him by hunger? Why do you not by fasting tame your unmanageable body? He that deprives his body of nothing that is lawful, will soon allow it what is unlawful." Such a one, in spite of his good resolutions, will be enticed to sin often enough by the concupiscence of his well-fed and pampered body. But he who mortifies his flesh withdraws from the flame of corcupiscence the nourishing oil, so that, by-and-by, it will be extinguished. Hence St. Bernard says: "Fasting not only blots out past sins, but also prevents future ones."

(*b.*) Do not say that fasting is an arduous means, repugnant to self-love. St. Augustine says: "Do you accuse a father of harshness or imprudence if he occasionally refuses his child something for which it longs, in order to exercise him in obedience and self-denial? Or do you call a master imprudent and uncharitable if he punishes his stubborn servant, and by chastisement keeps him in subjection?" Should a little mortification, such as the forty days' fast prescribed by the Church, appear too arduous, when there is a question of rescuing the soul, and with it the body, from the everlasting fire of hell? How unreasonable are those Christians who disregard this precept.

2. *We render the practice of virtue easy, and obtain the more certainly God's grace and eternal salvation.*

(*a.*) In proportion as that which is earthly within us is weakened by fasting, that which is heavenly is strengthened. Nothing damps our courage more, nothing draws our spirit more violently from prayer and meditation, nothing cripples our longing for heavenly things, more than the inordinate desire after sensual pleasures. He that is controlled by the impulses of his sensual nature is in danger of exchanging his eternal salvation for a momentary pleasure. Since by fasting sensuality is weakened and mortified, it is the source of spiritual power and of a more heavenly life.

(*b.*) All holy persons were convinced of this; therefore they fasted zealously and rigorously. St. John the Baptist fasted austerely during his whole life; the Scripture says that his food consisted of locusts and wild honey.—*Matt.* 3: 4. Anna, a widow, until four-score and four years, served God in fasting and prayer day and night.—*Luke* 2: 37. St. Anthony the hermit frequently fasted for three days and nights, and on the fourth day ate only a piece of bread. In the time of St. Augustine there were many

Christians who fasted most rigorously; not only strong men, but weak youths, tender virgins and aged persons, frequently abstained from all food for the space of three days and nights. In short, we can not find a saint in the whole calendar of the Church who was not given to this species of mortification.

PERORATION.

Fast at least in so far as the Church obliges you, for fasting is useful. St. Bernard says: "Fasting is not only a cleansing from sin, but also an expiation of it; it not only obtains pardon for us, but also merits grace, it not only blots out past sins, but also prevents future ones." Unite your corporal fast with a spiritual one. Subdue your passions, avoid sin. During the holy season of Lent you must give up enmities, restore ill-gotten goods, dissolve all sinful connections and familiarities, and avoid the proximate occasion of sin, that your fasting may be holy and acceptable to God and profitable to yourselves, and may draw down upon you God's favor and blessing. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

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7. MORAL SKETCH.

WHY WE MUST FAST.

Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. —*II. Cor.* 6: 2.

With the holy season of Lent, which we commenced last Wednesday, it is the same as with the harvest time; laborers who are indolent find no pleasure in it, because it requires a great deal of exertion and the surmounting of many difficulties. Those, on the contrary, who love to labor, are glad that harvest time is coming round, for they know that the rich blessings of the harvest are worth a few days' exertion and trouble. In like manner the holy time of fasting is a sad time for worldly-minded people, because all worldly amusements are forbidden and exercises of mortification are prescribed; but to him who is penetrated by a true spiritual fervor, the time of Lent is desirable, for he considers it is a spiritual harvest, in which he can reap rich food for his soul.

Let us be zealous Catholics, and cheerfully submit to the sacrifice which Lent demands of us, that it may become for us an acceptable time and a day of salvation; let us conscientiously keep the ecclesiastical precept of fasting, because fasting is, as we shall consider to-day—

I. Acceptable to God, and
II. Profitable to ourselves.

PART I.

That fasting is acceptable to God he has frequently revealed in the Old and New Testaments.

1. *Under the Old Law.*

(*a.*) We know that God forbade our first parents in Paradise, under the penalty of death, to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil—*Gen.* 2: 17. Thus, you see, the precept to abstain, to fast, is of very ancient date, for it was the first precept given by God to man; and the first good work that man should have done was to abstain. From this it naturally follows that abstaining or fasting pleases God; but it displeases the devil, else he would not have seduced our first parents and persuaded them to transgress the precept. We ought to consider this, and fast strictly, in order to please God and displease the devil.

(*b.*) In the Old Law we find two very renowned men whom God glorified by great miracles, Moses and Elias. Both fasted, and by their forty days' fast even became types of Christ. Moses fasted forty days' on Mount Sinai, and received from the hands of God the two tables of the holy law.—*Ex.* 31: 18. Elias also fasted forty days till he came to Mount Horeb, where God revealed himself to him.—*III. Kings* 19. That Moses and Elias were particular friends of God is evident from the fact that they were on Mount Thabor at the Transfiguration of our Lord.

(*c.*) To the pious women who are eminent among all of their sex in the Old Law belong Esther and Judith; both received great graces from God through their fasts. The prudent Esther by fasting frustrated the designs of the proud Aman and saved her people from destruction.—*Esth.* 4: 16. By fasting the brave Judith conquered Holofernes and saved her city; Bethulia.—*Jud.* 8: 6.

(*d.*) The Prophet Jonas, by God's commandment, had already announced to the city of Nineve its destruction. What saved that

city? Fasting. Neither king, nor people, nor beasts took either food or drink; all from the highest to the lowest did penance, and God spared their city.—*Jon.* 3.

(*e.*) The Israelites had often grievously sinned, therefore God punished them severely; but as often as they did penance and fasted they found grace and pardon. In the days of Heli they suffered many defeats, and when, following the advice of Samuel the Prophet, they had recourse to fasting, they were converted from their idolatry, and God showed them mercy and delivered them from the hands of their enemies.—*I. Kings* 7 : 6.

2. *Under the New Law.*

(*a.*) At the inauguration of the New Law we first meet with St. John the Baptist, of whom an angel said to Zachary before he was conceived in his mother's womb, that he would drink no wine nor strong drink.—*Luke* 1 : 15. In fact, the whole life of this greatest of all prophets was a continual fast. "John had his garment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins, and his meat was locusts and wild honey."—*Matt.* 3: 4.

(*b.*) Jesus Christ himself gives us the example by his fasting, for, as the gospel tells us, he fasted in the desert forty days and forty nights so austerely that during this long space of time he abstained entirely from food and drink. After these things who can doubt that fasting is a work pleasing to God?

(*c.*) Jesus foretold that his followers would fast: The days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they shall fast."—*Matt.* 9: 15. As Jesus Christ, the bridegroom of the Church, is taken away from us, it follows that all good Christians and followers of Christ must fast. The Apostles and early Christians observed the forty days' fast. They would have been ashamed to call themselves Christians if they had not imitated Christ in fasting. Read the Lives of the Saints, and, I assure you, you will not find a single saint who did not fast. And how austerely did the primitive Christians fast! They ate during the forty days but one meal daily, and that in the evening. The meals were poor, for they abstained, not only from meat and milk, but also from other costly dishes. They never drank wine. St. Cyril says: "We fast by abstaining from meat and wine." They considered that fasting consists not only in enduring hunger, but also thirst, for at their meals they not only drank no wine, but they even abstained from water. No one exempted himself from fasting; all, young and old alike, even those who worked hard, fasted. During Holy Week, as Epiphanius tells

us, they used nothing but bread, water, and salt. What a rigorous fast! And shall we not perform this work, which is so pleasing to God?

PART II.

The Church in yesterday's mass prayed thus: "Receive, O Lord, our humble supplication, and grant that we may celebrate with true devotion this holy fast which has been instituted for the benefit of our souls and bodies."

By this prayer of the Church we are taught that fasting is salutary both for *our soul and body.*

1. *For our soul.*

(*a.*) *Fasting has the virtue of cleansing from sin.* The Jews believed this, and therefore their days of penance were also fast days. "Every soul that is not afflicted on this day (the great day of propitiation), shall perish from among his people."—*Lev.* 23: 29. Among Christians also fasting was considered a means of obtaining from God the forgiveness of sin. Hence St. Basil says: "Fast, because you have sinned. By fasting you will blot out the sins which you have committed against God." This, however, is not to be understood as if fasting effected immediately the forgiveness of sin, as the Sacrament of Penance does. Fasting has not this virtue, but if we fast with a contrite heart, we may confidently hope that God will give us special graces to enable us to make a good confession and obtain the forgiveness of all our sins. By penitential fasting, as well as by other works of penance, we can blot out venial sins.

(*b.*) *Fasting expiates the temporal punishments due to sin.* First, it averts the temporal punishments which God generally inflicts upon men in this world for their sins. Thus God withdrew the punishments which he was about to inflict upon the Ninevites, because they fasted and did penance in sackcloth and ashes.—*Jon.* 3. In like manner God withdrew the chastisements, which he had announced to Achab by his Prophet Elias, because this king, filled with contrition, fasted.—*III. Kings* 21. Fasting in particular remits the temporal punishment due to sin, and which would otherwise have to be undergone in purgatory, after the guilt of the sin has been removed. This was the doctrine of the Church from the beginning; it is for this reason that she always imposed upon Christians fasting as a penitential work.

(*c.*) *Fasting prevents sin.* Jesus once cast out a devil whom his disciples after much labor could not expel. To the question why

they could not cast him out, Jesus replied: "This kind (of evil spirits) is not cast out but by prayer and fasting."—*Matt.* 17: 20. For the casting out of devils, besides prayer, fasting is necessary; but since sins are works of the devil (*I. John* 3: 8), we must not only pray, but also fast, in order to guard ourselves against them. "Our flesh," says St. Augustine, "is our draught-horse; generally the flesh draws, and compels us to follow and deviate from the right road; this animal we bridle by depriving it of fodder, and we tame it by hunger."

(*d.*) Finally, *fasting elevates the soul to God.* The more we yield to sensual enjoyments, the more imperious the flesh becomes and the weaker the spirit. By fasting, the soul, weighed down by the flesh, is lightened and freed. It becomes possible to mount up to God. Hence Moses, Daniel, John the Baptist, the Apostles, and all the saints of the Old and the New Law fasted, in order to elevate themselves to spiritual things and unite themselves with God. The Church testifies to this effect of fasting in her prayers, and especially in the preface during Lent, wherein we read: "Thou who by a corporal fast dost repress the vicious inclinations, elevate the spirit, grant virtue and reward." St. Ambrose says "By fasting we lead the life of angels; it is a ladder by which we ascend to God."

2. *For our body.* Proofs:

(*a.*) *The Sacred Scripture.* "Be not greedy in any feasting, and pour not out thyself upon any meat; for in many meats there will be sickness, and greediness will turn to choler. By surfeiting many have perished, but he that is temperate shall prolong life."—*Ecclus.* 37: 32-34. Daniel and his companions at Babylon ate only pulse, and drank nothing but water, and yet "their faces appeared fairer and fatter than all the children that ate of the king's meat."—*Dan.* 1: 8-15.

(*b.*) *Physicians.* The renowned physician Hippocrates attained old age. Being asked the reason, he answered: "I never rose from the table satiated." Another, a modern physician, says: "I have practiced medicine for the last sixty years, and during this long period have sought in vain for three persons, viz., a tradesman who knows his trade well, works industriously, and yet can not succeed; a Christian who loves to hear sermons and yet does not improve; and a man who is abstemious, and yet dies prematurely." As the industrious tradesman never will suffer want, nor the diligent hearer of the word of God become wicked, so the temperate man can not easily die prematurely. Temperance in eating and drinking prevents all diseases which come from a

disordered stomach; it moderates and lessens all other bodily evils, quiets the passions, preserves a spirit of joyousness, and is therefore the best means for the preservation of health and the prolongation of life.

(*c.*) *History and experience.* Who ever fasted more severely than the fathers in the desert, the hermits? They often ate nothing but roots and herbs, drank nothing but water and yet attained an old age. St. Anthony lived to 105, St. Pachomius to 110, and St. Romuald to 120. It is feasting, not fasting, that brings on sickness. No one ever knew a person who became sick and died owing to fasting, but many by intemperance in eating and drinking become ill and sink into an early grave, as every one knows. St. Jerome therefore is right in saying: "Fasting is the mother of health, but intemperance is the mother of sickness."

PERORATION.

Strictly observe the ecclesiastical precept of fasting during this holy season, for it is acceptable to God and profitable to you. But be not satisfied with merely abstaining from flesh meat on the days appointed, and in depriving yourselves of the usual quantity of meat and drink, but unite the spiritual fast with the corporal; carefully avoid sin, mortify your inordinate inclinations, bridle your senses, the ears, eyes, and tongue; live as much as possible a retired life, and occupy yourselves with God and the concerns of your soul. This is the way to make your fast truly holy and salutary, and one that will merit the grace of God and life everlasting. Amen.



SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

EPISTLE. *I. Thess.* 4: 1-7. Brethren: We pray and beseech you in the Lord Jesus, that as you have received of us, how you ought to walk and to please God, so also you would walk, that you may abound the more. For you know what precepts I have given to you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from fornication. That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor, not in the passion of lust, like the Gentiles that know not God, and that no man overreach nor circumvent his brother in business: because the Lord is the avenger of all these things, as we have told you before, and have testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto sanctification; in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

WHY WE MUST SHUN THE VICE OF IMPURITY.

What St. Paul had impressed upon the minds of the Thessalonians orally he also inculcated upon them eloquently and emphatically in writing—namely, that they should regulate their conduct according to the holy will of God, and strive to become more and more perfect. For, as the Apostle adds, this is the will of God, your sanctification. God said to the Israelites: "Be ye holy, because I the Lord your God am holy."—*Lev.* 19: 2. And what else did Jesus inculcate upon us by his word and example but that we should continually strive for our sanctification? "Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect."—*Matt.* 5: 48. This was the aim of all his instructions and exhortations. We need not wonder that St. Paul and the other Apostles exhort us to aim at the sanctification of our lives. But nothing is more opposed to our sanctification than impurity, and for this reason St. Paul, in the epistle of this day, warns us against that vice and gives the reasons *why we must shun it.* What, then, are the reasons?

1. The Apostle gives as the first reason for the shunning of impurity, the *will of God. This is the will of God, your sanctification; that you should abstain from fornication.*

(*a.*) The ancient Pagans were so blinded that they considered the basest offenses against purity no sin, nay, they represented their gods to themselves as living in impurity and pleased with obscenity. This was the reason why they made the vice of impurity a part of their religious service, so that in their religous meetings they allowed themselves the most abominable debaucheries, imagining that their gods were pleased with these things. What horrid blindness! The Christians of Thessalonica had been but lately converted, and lived among Pagans, who yielded without shame to carnal lusts. St. Paul therefore considered it necessary to instruct them by letter, assuring them, as he had already done orally, that the infinitely holy God is grievously offended by everything unchaste, and that he requires us all to live chastely. *This is the will of God, that you should abstain from fornication.*

(*b.*) This admonition deserves our most serious consideration. There was hardly ever a time in the history of Christianity when the vice of impurity was so prevalent as it is at present. All are corrupted with this vice, young and old, rich and poor, in town and country. Many no longer regard this abominable vice as sinful; they excuse it as a human frailty, nay, they endeavor to represent it as a natural necessity, which can be as little forbidden as eating or drinking. Poets and romancers so adorn this shocking vice, and throw around it such a glow and glitter, while cunningly concealing its disgusting nature, that the young and incautious are led to look upon the blackest crimes against God's law, which are also crimes against the laws of human society, not only without a shudder, but with a great measure of indulgence. And what is said of poets and novelists may be averred even with still more reason of most of our theatres. And young men and maidens read such books and frequent theatres, and do so, not with the connivance only, but with the full knowledge and approval of their parents! How great, then, is the danger of corruption! Since every one by nature inclines to impurity, and frequently is sorely tempted, how easy is it for one in the midst of a blind and corrupt world to be infected. Therefore, never forget the word of the Apostle: *This is the will of God, that you should abstain from fornication.* Though you be tempted interiorly and exteriorly, think of God, in whose eyes every kind of impurity is an abomination, and say within yourselves, with Joseph of Egypt: "How then can I do this wicked thing, and sin against my God?"—*Gen.* 39: 9.

2. A second motive for the preservation of chastity is, that impurity desecrates the body of man and robs him of his honor and good name. *It is the will of God that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor, not in the passion of lust.*

(*a.*) The vessel of which the Apostle here speaks is our body; in it the soul is like a jewel in a casket. Our body is sacred, for like the soul, it is created by God, redeemed by Christ, and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and is destined to rise again glorious and immortal, and, united with the soul, to enjoy everlasting felicity in heaven. Should we not keep this body in honor? Who would dare to use his own body, or that of his neighbor, for base things? Not only our soul, but also our body, is a temple of God, as the Apostle says: "Know you not that you (both body and soul) are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?"—*I. Cor.* 3: 16. If any one were to commit a sin of impurity in a church where Jesus Christ is really present in the Blessed Eucharist, what a sin it would be! Such a church would be desecrated, and no mass could be said in it until it has been purified. What an abominable sin, then, is impurity, by which the body, this temple of God, is desecrated! Need we wonder that the Apostle adds: "But if any one violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God *is* holy, which you are."—*I. Cor.* 3: 16. The Apostle goes still farther, and says: "Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ?"—*I. Cor.* 6: 15. The bodies of Christians are not something separated from Christ, they are most intimately united with him by baptism, but more particularly by holy communion; they are, as it were, flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone. Can we with anything but horror read what the Apostle writes: "Shall I then, take the members of Christ and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid."—*I. Cor.* 6: 15.

(*b.*) It is the vice of impurity that robs man of his honor and good name. Though the world excuses this vice and tries to pass it off as a harmless pleasure, it remains true that every man, even the sinner, despises the impure in his heart. What do people generally think of a lewd female? what of the debauchee? Everybody despises them; for we read: "Every woman that is a harlot, shall be trodden upon as dung in the way."—*Ecclus.* 9: 10. Amnon so despised Thamar, after she had yielded to his impure love, that he commanded his servant "to put her out and shut the door after her."—*II. Kings* 13. Jehu commanded that Jezebel, who to attract attention had painted her face and adorned herself, should be thrown out of the window headlong.—*IV. Kings* 9. No wonder the unchaste reap shame and mockery, since, when they themselves think of their crimes, they blush and feel abashed.

3. And another reason why Christians should shun impurity **is** *that they know God and his holy law far better than the Gentiles.* You should not burn *in the passion of lust, like the Gentiles that know not God.* If the Gentiles yield themselves to impurity, they have at least *some* excuse, because they are in ignorance as to the baseness and culpability of this vice. But this is not the case with us, for we know by the word of God that whatever violates the chastity of our state of life is strictly forbidden. We know that we sin grievously even in thoughts and desires against chastity, if we entertain them voluntarily, take pleasure in them, and consent to them. We know that unchaste glances, words, touches, and actions, if they are voluntary, exclude us from heaven and draw eternal damnation after them. "I say to you that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart."—*Matt.* 5 : 28. "Fornication and all uncleanness, let it not so much as be named among you, as becometh saints."—*Ephes.* 5 : 3. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are, fornication, uncleanness, immodesty, luxury, ... they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God."—*Gal.* 5 : 19, 21. We know the precepts and ordinances of our holy religion, which enjoin on us the duty of leading a mortified life and of manfully renouncing everything that entices to sin, especially to the sin of impurity; we also believe that God, the infinitely pure and holy God, inclines with special love to chaste souls, and that he calls them blessed.

What follows from this? Without doubt, that we are more strictly bound to preserve chastity than were the Gentiles, and that if we do not live chastely a worse lot awaits us than shall befall them. The words of Jesus apply to us: "I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, in the day of judgment, than for you."—*Matt.* 11 : 22.

4. As the final motive for avoiding impurity the Apostle refers to the *punishment that awaits the unchaste : The Lord is the avenger of all these things, as we have told you before, and have testified.*

God punishes the unchaste even here below. Examples: In the days of Noe the deluge came upon the earth and drowned the whole human race, with the exception of eight persons. Why? Because of the vice of impurity, for we read: "All flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth."—*Gen.* 6: 12. It was on account of impurity that God rained fire and brimstone upon the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrha, so that all perished, excepting Lot and his family. When the Israelites lived in Settim and committed impurities with the Moabites, the Lord became angry, and twenty-four thousand men were slain.—*Num.* 25: 9. "He that joineth himself to harlots will be wicked. Rottenness and

worms shall inherit him, and he shall be lifted up for a greater example; and his soul shall be taken away out of the number." —*Ecclus.* 19: 3. Do not history and experience attest the truth of this divine sentence? A renowned physician (Tissot) says: "No contagious sickness destroys so much the natural powers of the body, debilitates youth, brings on so general a decay of the mind, and shortens life, as illicit love." "The adulterer," says St. Chrysostom, "though he be accused by no one, never ceases interiorly to accuse himrelf. The lust lasts but a short time, but the pain of remorse remains, with fear and trembling, suspicion and anguish. He lives like Cain, trembling and moaning upon earth; and though no one sees it, he carries fire in his heart."

5. *And in the other world eternal damnation awaits the unchaste, unless they do true penance.* "Do not err; neither fornicators nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor the effeminate . . . . . shall possess the kingdom of God."—*I. Cor.* 6: 9, 10. Whoremongers . . . shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."—*Apoc.* 21: 8. Who can count all the unfortunate persons who will be condemned on account of impurity? And how will those condemned souls rage against themselves, how will they curse themselves and their accomplices, when they consider that they have plunged themselves into eternal damnation on account of abominable and momentary pleasures, which even here on earth caused them so much bitterness and woe.

PERORATION.

These are motives why we should avoid impurity. Consider them well, and shun every shadow of sin against the holy virtue of purity as you would persons infected with a plague. Take advice, Catholic young people. You are greatly exposed to the dangers of impurity, you live in a world that is full of snares; the vivacity of your age, your want of experience and prudence, render it easy to the tempters to poison your heart and to rob you of your innocence. Walk, therefore, cautiously on the slippery ways of this life; have God before your eyes and pray that you may not lose a treasure which an ocean of tears will not enable you to recover. And you, Catholic parents, if you have the temporal and spiritual welfare of your children at heart, and wish to be able to stand before the judgment-seat of God, watch over them and do all you can to protect them from ruin. Let us all strive for purity and sanctity; never forget our Lord's words: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God."—*Matt.* 5: 8. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

GOSPEL. *Matt.* 17: 1-9. At that time: Jesus taketh unto him Peter and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart. And he was transfigured before them. And his face did shine as the sun: and his garments became white as snow. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then Peter answering, said to Jesus: Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. And as he was yet speaking, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them. And lo, a voice out of the cloud, saying: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him. And the disciples hearing, fell upon their face, and were very much afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said to them: Arise, and fear not. And they. lifting up their eyes, saw no one, but only Jesus. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying: Tell the vision to no man, till the Son of Man be risen from the dead.

2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST.

Our Saviour upon one occasion said to his disciples: "Amen, I say to you, there are some that stand here, that shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man in his kingdom."—*Matt.* 16: 28. Several holy Fathers of the Church, such as St. Jerome, St. Chrysostom, and St. Ambrose, understand by this coming of Christ in his kingdom his transfiguration on Mount Tabor, which event occurred six days afterwards. Many of them interpret these six days as the six ages, each of which comprises a thousand years. They are of opinion that the world will last six thousand years, and that the last judgment, and the glorification of Jesus in the sight of heaven and earth, will then follow. According to this opinion, we are living now in the last age, and the last day is not very far off; it will come in a little more than a hundred years. Whether this will be really so or not, we cannot say with certainty, as we have no particular revelation on the subject; however, it is good for us to watch, because we know not at what hour our Lord will come.—*Matt.* 24: 42.

Let us to-day meditate on the transfiguration of Jesus, and consider what occurred—

I. Before the transfiguration;
II. During the transfiguration;
III. After the transfiguration.

PART I.

What occurred before the transfiguration of Christ the gospel tells us in a few words: *Jesus taketh unto him Peter and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart.*

1. Jesus had twelve Apostles and seventy-two disciples, but of all these he chose only three, viz., Peter, James, and John, and brought them up into a high mountain.

(*a.*) *Why did not Christ take all his Apostles and disciples with him, but only three?*

First, because Jesus wished his transfiguration to be kept secret. He would not have attained his object so surely if he had made all his Apostles and disciples witnesses of it. This ought to be a lesson to us to keep the secrets which have been confided to us, and not to be curious and inquisitive about things which we need not know. He that cares not for things that do not concern him, lives the most quiet life.

Secondly, because presence at the transfiguration was one of the extraordinary graces which God, in his wisdom, is not accustomed to grant to all, but only to a chosen few. Such graces are not necessary to every man for salvation; for this reason God imparts them only to a few, to whom, for certain reasons and on account of particular circumstances, they are necessary or salutary. From this the important lesson follows, that we must no be discontented or lose courage when God showers on others his goods and graces more abundantly than on us; let us humble ourselves before him and employ well the graces which we ret ceive of his goodness; then we shall attain our salvation, as well as the more favored souls.

(*b.*) *Why did Christ take with him Peter, James, and John?* According to the interpretation of the Fathers, he did this for two reasons:

First, because these three Apostles particularly needed to be strengthened in the faith; Peter, as the head of the Church and

vicar of Christ upon earth; James, as the first martyr among the Apostles; John, who by his gospel was to defend the divinity of Christ against the false teachers of the first and following centuries. The faith of these Apostles was especially strengthened at the transfiguration of Christ, because they beheld him in heavenly glory, and heard Moses and Elias, and the heavenly Father himself, giving testimony to him.

Secondly, as a reward for the virtues by which these Apostles distinguished themselves: Peter, by his constancy and zeal; James, by his love of prayer and austerity of life; John, by his virginal purity and by his intimate love for Jesus. Here we see the paths by which we can come to God and obtain great graces—namely, 1st, by faith, which for the sake of Jesus and his holy doctrine makes one ready for martyrdom and death; 2dly, by mortification and prayer; and 3dly, by chastity in one's state of life and by the love of Jesus.

2. *Christ took the three Apostles, and brought them into a high mountain apart.* The Sacred Scripture does not mention what mountain it was, but according to most of the interpreters it was Thabor, a celebrated mountain in Galilee, two miles distant from Nazareth. It is nine miles in circumference at the base and three at the top, taking two hours to reach its summit. The ascent of the mountain by Jesus and the three Apostles is instructive.

(*a.*) The mountain signifies first of all, *Christian perfection*, to which every Christian is bound to aspire, according to the word of Jesus: "Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect."—*Matt.* 5: 48. It is a duty for us to become daily more perfect; that is, to avoid our faults more and more, and to make progress in virtue. How do matters stand with us? Do we aspire to perfection? Ah! how many are there among us who, instead of going forward, go backward, and who must acknowledge that five or ten years ago they were better than they are now?

(*b.*) The mountain also signifies *heaven*, to which we are all called. Christ wishes to have us all with him in heaven, therefore he says himself: "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I shall go, and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and will take you to myself, that where I am you also may be."—*John* 14: 2, 3. Oh, what joy, what consolation for us, that we can say: I am called to heaven! Let us never lose sight of our vocation.

(*c.*) As every high mountain, so also Thabor is difficult to climb; it needs great exertion to reach the summit. It also involves

labor to arrive at Christian perfection and heaven. Christ himself says: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away."—*Matt.* 11: 12. And why? First, because by nature we are inclined to sin, and our inborn concupiscence makes the exercise of every virtue difficult; secondly, because the world by its scandals, illusions, and persecutions endeavors to deter us from the service of God; and thirdly, because the devil everywhere lays snares to draw us into sin. But all this must not discourage us, for "we can do all things in him who strengtheneth us."—*Phil.* 4: 13.

PART II.

At the transfiguration of Jesus upon Mount Thabor, we must consider—

1. *The change of the form of Jesus.* The gospel says: *He was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as snow.* This transfiguration was an effect of the gift of lucidity, which like the other gifts of a glorified body, was proper to the body of Christ and to his soul united to his divinity from the first moment of his Incarnation. In order to be able to converse with men and to instruct them, as well as to suffer and die for them, he concealed under the veil of his pure humanity the transcendent lucidity upon which now, for the first time, the Apostles gazed in ecstasy and awe. Here upon Mount Thabor he interrupted this miracle of his veiled divine nature, so that his transfiguration must not be looked upon as a miracle, but rather as the cessation or interruption of a continual thirty-three years' miracle. To what an extent does Jesus manifest his humility and love by the institution of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, in which he hides both his divinity and humanity, and appears under the species of bread!

2. *The apparition of Moses and Elias. And behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.* These two most renowned men of the Old Testament, the lawgiver Moses and the Prophet Elias, appeared, to testify that Jesus Christ was he who, in the Law and the writings of the prophets, had been foretold and promised as the Redeemer of the world, and that the Law and the prophecies, through him, had come to an end and ceased, being replaced by the New Law with its promises and graces. These two saints distinguished themselves by their zeal for God and his holy law; for this reason Jesus wished to honor them especially, and to make them witnesses of his transfiguration. Let us also be zealous for the law of God, and promote his honor by word and example. As St. Luke remarks,

Moses and Elias spoke of his decease which was to take place in Jerusalem (9: 31). The Apostles were to learn by this, that his passion and death were not accidental, but willed by God—something which he had already foretold to men in the Old Law; that consequently, when the time for his passion and death should really come they must not waver in their faith, but be confirmed in it. The circumstance that Moses and Elias spoke of his passion and death in the midst of the joys of his transfiguration may serve as a salutary lesson for us, that in the tribulations of life we should preserve a cheerful countenance, mindful of the words of the Apostles, "that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us."—*Rom.* 8: 18:

3. *The rapture of Peter:—Lord, it is good for us to be here; if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.*

(*a.*) At the sight of the transfigured Saviour, Peter becomes entirely beside himself; he is so enraptured that he scarcely knows what he says; he forgets his vocation and every earthly thing; his only wish and desire is to remain upon the mountain, and to enjoy the felicity of the vision of the transfigured Redeemer. If the sight of the transfigured humanity of Christ makes Peter so beside himself and intoxicates him with delight, what will be the effect of the vision of God and of the full enjoyment of the eternal celestial joys? We should frequently—nay, daily—call to mind this unspeakable beatitude which awaits us in heaven; for this remembrance will urge us to to practice virtue, and to bear all sufferings patiently. Example: The Machabean brothers and their mother.—*II. Mach.* 7. "For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.—*II. Cor.* 4: 17.

(*b.*) Peter wished to build three tabernacles, and always to remain upon the mountain. For this he would deserve rebuke, if the circumstance that he was beside himself did not excuse him. How much more do we deserve rebuke when we wish only for enjoyment, and endeavor to keep everything arduous away from us as much as possible, even to the violation of our duties, and nevertheless expect to earn heaven! But that will never do. He who wishes to rejoice with Christ in heaven, must carry the cross with him upon earth. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."—*Matt.* 16: 24. Let us not regard this world as a lasting city, a resting-place, but as a place of warfare, a workshop, in which we must work, fight, and suffer, if we wish to enter into eternal rest.

4. *The voice out of the cloud.* Whilst Peter was beside himself with joy and wished to remain upon the mountain, a cloud overshadowed Jesus, Moses, and Elias, so that Peter and the other Apostles could see nothing more of the apparition, but they heard a voice out of the cloud saying: *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*

(*a.*) God, the heavenly Father himself, declares that Jesus is his Son, of the same essence, begotten by him from eternity, like him all-wise and omnipotent; in fine, true God. Hold firm to this fundamental truth of our holy faith, in opposition to so many unbelievers and free-thinkers, who absolutely deny the divinity of Jesus, and only regard him as the wise man of Nazareth.

(*b.*) God the Father in heaven enjoins it on us as a duty to hear Jesus, that is, to believe what he teaches and to do what he commands. But we hear Christ when we hear the Holy Catholic Church, for Christ speaks through the mouth of the Church; what she teaches, is the infallible word of God, therefore he says: "He that heareth you, heareth me."—*Luke* 10: 16. How many Christians are there now-a-days who do not hear Christ and his Church, who neither believe nor do what the Church teaches or prescribes! But, "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican."—*Matt.* 18: 17.

5. *The fear of the Apostles.—The disciples hearing, fell upon their face, and were very much afraid.* The Apostles, on account of the wonderful apparition, and especially on account of the voice of God, which they heard out of the cloud, were seized with so great a fear that they fell upon their face. If the gentle voice of God caused the Apostles to be in such a state of terror, what dismay will overwhelm the reprobate when, on the general judgment day, they hear from the divine Judge the sentence of their condemnation? "Three things I fear," the Abbot Elias used to say, "the first, when my soul shall depart from my body; the second, when I must appear before God, my Judge; and the third, when my sentence shall be passed upon me." Let us frequently think well on these three things, and live in such a manner that when they come, they may be to us, not an object of terror, but of consolation and hope.

PART III.

After the transfiguration we have yet to consider—

1. *The calming of the Apostles.—Jesus came and touched them, and said to them: Arise, and fear not.* The Apostles were seized

with great terror on account of the heavenly apparition and the voice they had heard; Jesus approached, touched, and calmed them If, on account of impending sufferings, or evils that happen, fear comes upon us, it is but natural; but if Jesus comes to us with his grace, we have no reason to fear. If, therefore, our avocation or station in life enjoins on us something arduous as a duty, let us not be afraid, for in this case Jesus is with us. With his assistance we shall safely and prosperously accomplish that which seems to surpass our strength, if we only labour with humility and confidence. Neither must we be afraid when we have to withstand long and violent temptations; let us put our trust in Christ, and fight with courage and perseverance, and the victory will be ours. "If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear."—*Ps.* 26: 3.

2. *The circumstance of Christ being alone.—And they, lifting up their eyes, saw no one, but only Jesus.* The voice from heaven, the bright cloud, Moses and Elias, the shining face of Christ, and the splendor of his garments—all had disappeared; our dear Lord in his usual form alone remained. Learn from this, that in good and evil days, in gladness and in sadness, you must turn your eyes to Jesus alone. If you are made partakers of some benefit, even a spiritual one, if everything go well with you, if you enjoy interior consolations, consider none of this as your last end; turn your gaze on Christ alone, cling to him and love him with your whole heart. If tribulation befall you, if the whole world turn its back upon you, if even Moses and Elias, your friends, depart from you—still, if you have Jesus, you have enough and more than enough, for Christ is a superabundant compensation for every loss.

3. *The charge of Christ to keep the apparition secret.—And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying: Tell the vision to no man, till the Son of Man be risen from the dead.*

In giving this charge to the Apostles Christ directly and plainly intimated that they should not glory in the grace of which they were made partakers. Graces received are best preserved when we are humbly silent regarding them. He who without necessity reveals them and boasts of them, betrays pride; but God withdraws his grace from the proud. It is also very wrong for us to glory in what is not our own; but we have nothing that is good, for from ourselves we have nothing but misery and sin. And if we possessed the merits of a St. Paul, we should be obliged to confess with him: "By the grace of God I am what I am."—*I. Cor.* 15: 10. Let us be humble, and employ the graces

which God imparts to us for our sanctification, that we may be able to say with the Apostle: "And his grace in me hath not been void."—*I. Cor.* 15: 10.

PERORATION.

In conclusion, I would exhort you to make that ineffable felicity which the saints in heaven enjoy, the frequent subject of your meditation. If the world entice you to sensual and sinful joys, reflect how foolish you would be on account of contemptible and fleeting joys risk the everlasting glories of heaven. If you are obliged to endure tribulations, comfort yourselves with the thought that heaven is worth suffering something for. Keep a good conscience, be fervent in prayer, persevere in virtue, and follow Christ courageously and constantly on the way of the cross, that you may also follow him into the kingdom of his glory. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

THE EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

Jesus was transfigured before them.—Matt. 17: 2.

Our Blessed Lord with three of his disciples ascends a high mountain, and is transfigured before them. His face shines as the sun, and his garments become white as snow. Peter, beside himself in ecstasy, can only exclaim: *Lord, it is good for us to be here.* If this Apostle, who beheld only a few rays of the heavenly light streaming from Jesus, falls into an ecstasy, what felicity must it be to behold the glory of God in its fulness and to possess eternally him who is the author of all that is beautiful and good! Truly, this felicity will be unfathomable, therefore St. Paul says: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him."—*I. Cor.* 2: 9.

That we may be made partakers of this unspeakable happiness, a transfiguration, in a spiritual sense, must take place in us; our soul must be cleansed from all stains of sin and be adorned with

sanctifying grace, so that she may become beautiful and glorious before God and that God may take pleasure in her. This transfiguration of our soul is accomplished especially in the holy Sacrament of Penance, which all should receive at Easter, according to the precept of the Church. Of the requirements for a worthy reception of this Sacrament I shall speak to you to-day and on the following Sundays of Lent. To-day I intend to treat of the examination of conscience, and to answer the following three questions:

I. How must we begin the examination of conscience?
II. In what manner should we examine our conscience?
III. Against what faults must we guard in the examination of conscience?

PART I.

We must begin the examination of conscience by imploring the assistance of the Holy Ghost, that he may give us the grace rightly to know, to repent of, and to confess our sins. The assistance of the Holy Ghost is necessary—

1. *That we may rightly know our sins.* If light is wanting to us, our eyes are of little use, we see nothing with them; only when the light of the sun or some other light shines upon them, can the objects around us become visible. The same is the case with the understanding; we can see our sins as they are only when a supernatural light is cast upon them. This light proceeds from the Holy Ghost. He must enlighten our interior, before we can see what is amiss and sinful in us, before we can see it at least in such a way as to be able to make a thoroughly good confession.

2. *That we may truly and supernaturally repent of our sins, and make a firm purpose not to sin any more.* With our natural faculties we are incapable of doing or thinking anything meritorious for eternal life; we therefore can neither be sorry for our sins in a supernatural manner nor make a good resolution of amendment based upon supernatural motives. Only the Holy Ghost can enable us to do this, who, according to the Prophet Ezechiel (36: 26), can "take away the stony heart out of your flesh and will give you a heart of flesh;" only he can move us to true repentance, and give us courage and strength to make a firm resolution not to offend our God any more.

3. *That we may sincerely confess our sins.* We must sincerely confess all our sins, be they ever so base and shameful. This demands humiliation and self-denial which surpass the powers of

human nature unaided. If the Holy Ghost did not govern our tongues and thoughts, and encourage us to a sincere avowal of our sins, we should conceal the very things that should not be concealed, and leave the confessional greater sinners than when we entered it.

4. *That we may be excited to a true spirit of penance.* We must have the earnest will to make satisfaction to the divine justice for our sins. For this end we must repent again and again of our sins as long as we live, humble ourselves before God, perform various penitential works, and in particular accept with patience all the tribulations of life. For this also we need the grace of the Holy Ghost, "for it is God who worketh in us both to will and to accomplish."—*Phil.* 2: 13.

From all this you must perceive that the imploring of the Holy Ghost is not a thing of indifference when preparing for confession, but a matter of the very highest importance, nay, a necessity. He who omits it from levity, exposes himself to the danger of making a bad confession. Although the Holy Ghost gives us the first grace without our coöperation, he will not give us the further graces which are necessary for the worthy reception of the Sacrament of Penance, unless we petition for them; therefore Christ himself says: "Your Father who is in heaven will give good things to them that ask him."—*Matt.* 7: 11. Always begin the important business of confession with devout prayer, and implore the assistance of the Holy Ghost in the following manner: "Come, O Holy Ghost, enlighten my understanding, that I may rightly know my sins; and move my heart that I may sincerely repent of them, faithfully confess them, and truly amend my life."

PART II.

1. In what manner should we examine our conscience? We should call to mind—

(*a.*) *When it was that we last made a good confession, and whether we performed the penance then given us.* We must always mention when we made our *last* confession, as the confessor can then form an approximatively correct judgment of the state of the soul of the sinner.

(*b.*) But we must examine ourselves particularly as to when we last made a *good* confession, and how, in general, matters stand with our past confessions. If we have good reason to fear that any of them were bad ones, that is the first thing to be attended to. Should we neglect doing so, our present confession

would also be a bad one. Many confess invalidly because they do not examine themselves as to their former confessions, and do not care whether they were valid or not. All those who have never made a general confession, or who always relapse into their former sins and live carelessly, I would implore to ask themselves at their Easter confession. How is it with my past confessions? Was true contrition and a firm purpose of amendment wanting to me in any of those confessions? Did I not conceal something that I should have confessed? Did I perform the penance given me by the priest?

2. *We should examine ourselves in regard to the commandments of God, the precepts of the Church, and the obligations of our state of life, and carefully ascertain in what way and how often we have offended God in thought, word, deed, and omission; also in regard to the number and circumstances of all mortal sins.*

(*a.*) We can sin *in thought*, if we voluntarily and with pleasure represent to ourselves something bad and do not banish the thought, although we know that it is sinful.

(*b.*) *In desire*, if we not only take pleasure in bad thoughts, but have a desire for the act itself, namely, to see, hear, possess, or do what is bad. These bad thoughts and desires are mortal sins, if they concern anything that is grievously sinful and if we have fully consented to them. This examination of ourselves with regard to sins of thought and desire is very important, for on it frequently hinges the validity of our confession.

(*c.*) *In word*, when we use bad or immodest language. The sins of the tongue are without number and frequently mortal; therefore we must carefully examine ourselves with regard to them, especially obscene words, curses, imprecations, blasphemies, calumnies, slander, and detraction.

(*d.*) *In deed*, if we really do something bad; and by *omission*, if we omit the good which we could and should do.

3. That we may the better remember the sins which we have committed—

(*a.*) *We should go through the commandments and the precepts of the Church.* At each of these commandments represent to yourselves what they command or forbid; examine yourselves and see if you have not sinned against them.

(*b.*) *Through the obligations of our state of life.* Parents, children, husbands and wives, single persons, superiors and inferiors, mer-

chants, lawyers, physicians, the rich and the poor, etc., have particular duties. On a conscientious performance of them depends their salvation; therefore it is necessary that all examine themselves carefully in regard to them.

(*c*) *Through the other different kinds of sin.* These are the seven deadly sins, the six sins against the Holy Ghost, the four sins crying to heaven for vengeance, and the nine ways of being accessory to another person's sins.

Part III.

In the examination of conscience we must guard against the following faults:

1. *We must not examine ourselves too hastily and superficially.* The Council of Trent (*sess.* 14, *chapt.* 4) expressly requires a diligent searching of every nook and corner of the conscience. In order to examine the conscience properly, we must employ the necessary time and diligence, for the examination of the conscience is an important matter, because on it depends the completeness, and, consequently, the validity of the confession. You must, therefore, employ as much diligence in this as in other important affairs. As to how much time we ought to employ in the examination of conscience, no general rule can be given. The more carelessly we have lived, and the longer we have stayed away from confession, the more time and diligence we ought to employ in examining ourselves.

2. *We must not conceal our favorite sins from ourselves.* All have faults to which they are particularly inclined, and therefore they frequently commit them. Now, if such persons examine their conscience, their favorite sin occurs to their mind, but their self-love endeavors to palliate or excuse it in every possible way. Nay, self-love goes so far as to strip such favorite sins of their evil nature; and to represent them as praiseworthy actions. Thus it calls pride and ambition, self-respect; avarice, prudent economy, unchaste love, friendship. This self-love frequently so deceives men that they either do not accuse themselves at all of the sin to which they are most addicted, or if they do, they confess it without sorrow. In spite of the sermons they hear, in spite of all the confessor may say, they will not bring themselves to think it serious. Long habit, coupled with the machinations of Satan, has brought upon them a perversity of the mind, so that they can not see themselves in regard to that particular sin as the angels and even their fellow-men see them. Such persons are in desperate need of the light of the Holy Ghost. They are in

imminent danger of making bad confessions. You must, therefore, be on your guard, and in the examination of your conscience not permit yourselves to be controlled by self-love, or the spirit of the world, and you must not take everything to be trifling that the world considers as such, but place yourselves in spirit before the tribunal of God.

3. *We must avoid becoming too scrupulous.* The Council of Trent says (*sess.* 14, *ch.* 5): "It is impious to say that confession is impossible, or to consider it as an institution of torture. For it is known that the Church requires nothing of penitents but that, having examined themselves carefully, and searched all the nooks and corners of their conscience, they confess all the grievous sins they recollect; the other sins which, in spite of the examination, they do not remember, are considered as included in the confession. Hence they should say with the prophet, "from my secret sins cleanse me."—*Ps.* 18: 13. He, therefore, who examines his conscience candidly and as well as he can before every confession, has no reason to be scrupulous. Even if it should happen that he does not recollect some grievous sin, it is considered as included in the confession, and is remitted with the sins confessed. If he remembers it afterwards he has only to confess this particular sin, without repeating the whole confession.

PERORATION.

These are the rules to be observed in the examination of conscience before confession. You will facilitate this important business if you examine your conscience daily and do not delay confession too long. Follow these two rules, and you will always receive the Sacrament of Penance worthily.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

THE INSTITUTION OF THE FORTY DAYS' FAST.

Lord, it is good for us to be here.—Matt. 17: 4.

Peter sees only a weak ray of the divine majesty, and he is in a transport of joy and can only exclaim: *Lord, it is good for us to be here.* Oh! how glorious and beautiful must it be in heaven, where our glorified brethren dwell in close proximity to God and behold him face to face! I do not doubt that all of you have the most ardent desire for the blessed vision of God and the unspeakable joys connected with that vision. But that you may obtain that blessed end you must follow Jesus. And, as his whole life was a pure self-denial, mortification and continual carrying of the cross, nothing remains for us but to mortify our flesh with its concupiscences, and to walk in the way of the cross. We must practice these holy exercises during Lent, because it is a time of penance. I shall speak to-day of this holy time, and answer the following two questions:

I. Why did the Church institute the forty days' fast?
II. Why does she celebrate this time immediately before Easter?

PART I.

The Church instituted the forty days' fast, which St. Chrysostom and Pope Leo the Great declared to be an apostolic ordinance, for two reasons—

1. *Because the most renowned saints of the Old Law, and Jesus Christ himself, fasted forty days.*

(*a.*) As we read in the book of Exodus (*Ex.* 24: 18), Moses went up into a mountain, and he was there "forty days and nights, neither eating bread, nor drinking water."—*Deut.* 9: 9. He observed a strict fast. That God was pleased with the fast of Moses we can not for a moment doubt, for he favored him with his most intimate conversation, and gave him the two tables of stone on which he had written his holy commandments with his own hands. God also transfigured him, in some measure, in his

mortal body, for rays emanated from his head, and his face shone as the sun, so that he was obliged to put a veil on his face when he spoke to the Israelites, because they could not endure his splendor.

(*b.*) Elias kept a forty days' fast on his way to Mount Horeb. God was also pleased with his fast; for he favored him with a wonderful apparition, and took him to himself, not by death, but living, in a fiery chariot. Jesus distinguished both these saints, Moses and Elias, by making them witnesses of his transfiguration upon Mount Thabor.

St. Chrysostom points to these two great men of the Old Law, when he exhorts us to observe conscientiously the forty days' fast. When the great Moses had fasted forty days, he was worthy to receive the tables of the law, and, when coming down from the mountain and beholding the wickedness of the people, he broke them, he was again obliged to fast forty days, in order to receive the tables anew from above. An equally long fast was kept by Elias, who, taken up into heaven in a fiery chariot, never saw death.

(*c.*) Jesus likewise fasted in the desert forty days and forty nights before he began his public career. St. Chrysostom remarks: "Our Lord Jesus Christ himself fasted forty days and forty nights, before he entered into combat with the devil, and thus gave us all an example, that by it we should arm ourselves and gain strength for the combat with the enemy." Christ fasted, not for his sake, but for ours, to repair the sin of our progenitors, which, by our descent from them, became also our sin, and to redeem them and us from the consequences of this sin. It is therefore but just that we should deprive ourselves of some food and drink, and observe the forty days' fast according to the ordinance of the Church. Therefore St. Ambrose says: "If you wish to be a Christian, you must do what Christ did. He, who was without sin, fasted forty days; and you, who sin, will not fast forty days. He, I say, had no sin, and fasted for our sins. What kind of Christians are you, according to the testimony of your own conscience, if, during the time that Christ hungered for you, you satiate yourselves more than once a day?"

2. *To remind us of the duty of acknowledging God as our Supreme Lord and benefactor, and of giving the tithe due to him.* St. Gregory the Great says: "The forty days' fast should be scrupulously kept, and the fast should not be broken at all, with the exception of the Sundays, for these days are the tenth part of the year. For, counting from the first Sunday of Lent till Easter, we have

six weeks, which comprise forty-two days; if we deduct from them the six Sundays, which are not days of fasting, there remain thirty-six fasting days. Since the year comprises three hundred ang sixty-five days, and we fast thirty-six days, we give to God, as it were, the tenth part. But, that the holy number of forty days may be completed, which our Lord consecrated by his fasting, four days of the preceding week, namely, Ash Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, are added."

It is but just that the proprietor receive rent from the tenant. God is the proprietor of the universe. He owns us. We belong, with all that we have, to him. He demands what is due to him out of his property. Shall we unjustly withhold it? He demands neither our money nor our goods—with these we are to assist his poor—but a contrite heart. "A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit; a contrite and humbled heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."—*Ps.* 50: 19. This is the tithe which we owe to God; we must strictly keep the forty days' fast, mortify ourselves interiorly and exteriorly, and bring forth fruits worthy of penance.

PART II.

There are three reasons why the Church has ordained the celebration of the forty days' fast immediately before Easter:

1. *To guard us against the dangers to the soul which the springtime brings with it.* Easter, as we know, always occurs in the spring. Beautiful as this time is, it is generally more dangerous than any other season of the year. As the whole of nature awakens in spring, and drives the sap from the roots to the extremities of the boughs and branches, and makes everything bud throughout the vegetable kingdom, so in that microcosm or miniature world—man—everything revives, and consequently motions arise which frequently cause violent temptations. Man, too, comes forth from the ice-bound solitude in which winter held him captive, and takes part in various amusements and entertainments which are got up at this season. How easily may the springtime be to him an occasion of various sins, especially sins against holy purity!

What does the Church do to protect us from the dangers of spring? She makes the forty days' fast precede this time, and thereby gives an excellent means for preserving us from sin. If feasting is oil for the fire of concupiscence, fasting is the water that extinguishes its blazing flame. By the exercises of mortification the lusts of the flesh are not only weakened and kept down, but the spirit is enabled to overcome sensuality and the flesh, and to labor more earnestly to secure the one thing necessary—the salvation of the soul.

2. *To call to our mind the mystery of the bitter passion and death of our Saviour.* Shortly before Easter, on Good Friday, Jesus died on the cross for us. The entire forty days' fast is dedicated to this great mystery of divine love. Therefore during that time various devotions in honor of the passion and death of Jesus take place, such as the stations of the cross, the rosary, and sermons on the passion. Is it not quite natural, that whilst we are commemorating the passion and death of our Lord, we should fast and pray, renounce worldly joys and pleasures, and practice penitential works? Suppose a father of a family is dying. How will the children behave? Will they be merry, and enjoy themselves as at any other time? Will they have a good time whilst their father is groaning on his bed of pain, perhaps in the agonies of death? Certainly not, unless the last spark of filial love and gratitude be extinguished in their hearts. Who is nearer to us, our father or Jesus? Who loves us more, our father or Jesus? Who confers on us greater gifts, our father or Jesus? And ought we to live a life of frivolity and give way to the desires of the flesh during the time of Lent, when Jesus is suffering and dying for us?

3. *To prepare ourselves for the worthy reception of the holy Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist.* At Easter, or thereabouts, every Catholic is bound to receive communion; and in order to receive this Sacrament worthily he must go to confession. They who do not comply with this precept of the Church, commit a mortal sin, and expose themselves to the danger of being deprived of Christian burial. It is evident that both these sacraments must be received worthily. Now, the question is, who are they who will make a good confession and communion? Perhaps those who up to the day of confession live in frivolity and forgetfulness of God, and do not give the least sign of repentance? Assuredly not; with good reason it is to be feared that such persons will receive the sacraments unworthily for want of contrition and a firm purpose of amendment. Those who are in earnest exhibit penitential sentiments before receiving the sacraments, practicing works of mortification, devotion, and mercy, in order to render themselves worthy of the forgiveness of sin. Now, as the Church ardently wishes us to confess and communicate at Easter or thereabouts, she makes the forty days' fast precede Easter, and prescribes various exercises of penance, which enable us to receive worthily the holy sacraments.

PERORATION.

Let us, then, to-day earnestly resolve to spend the forty days' fast in a spirit of penance, according to the example of all who

are solicitous for their salvation. The aim and object of the fast is simply to arouse us to the necessity of changing our lives for the better, and awakening in us this penitential spirit. Follow advice which St. Ambrose gave the believers of his time: "Behold, beloved brethren, the holy days and the acceptable time have come again, of which it is written: 'Behold, now is the accept able time, now is the day of salvation.' Therefore you must be fervent in watching, fasting, giving alms, and praying. These days are ordained that the sins of the whole year may be blotted out in the forty days by penance. Believe it, and believe it firmly; if, in these days, you make a sincere confession and do penance, like the Ninevites, you will obtain the forgiveness of all your sins; and if, following their example, you call upon the Lord with your whole heart, you will draw down upon yourselves the divine mercy; and thus you will joyfully and securely celebrate the day of the Resurrection of the Lord, and after this life happily enter into the heavenly country." Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

SPIRITUAL TRANSFIGURATION.

He was transfigueed before them.—Matt. 17: 2.

The gospel of this day exhibits to us our divine Saviour transfigured. His face shines as the sun, his garments are white as snow; Moses and Elias, those renowned saints of the Old Law, appear and give testimony that he is the Messias and the promised Redeemer. And God, the heavenly Father, announces with a loud voice from heaven that Jesus is his well-beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased. Peter, in a transport of joy on account of what he sees and hears, is beside himself, and cries out, *Lord, it is good for us to be here.*

Why does the Church single out a gospel, the contents of which are so joyous, for this Sunday in Lent? The better to exhort us to penance, by pointing to the fruit of penance, which consists in our eternal glorification in heaven. The history of the transfiguration of Jesus shall be to us a fignre of our spiritual transfiguration, which is to take place during this holy time. We shall

meditate on this to-day. To attain our spiritual transfiguration, it is necessary—

I. That we go apart and ascend a high mountain;
II. That we take three companions with us;
III. That we change our character.

PART I.

The gospel says that Jesus took unto him three of his disciples, and brought them up into a high mountain.

To become spiritually transfigured it is necessary—

1. *That we go apart.* As long as a man finds pleasure in the world, participates in its frivolities, does not avoid the proximate occasions of sin, true repentance and conversion are out of the question. Hence, we see that all true penitents retired from the world as much as possible. Examples: Peter, who, leaving those in whose presence he had denied his divine Master, *went out*, and wept bitterly. Paul, who locked himself in for three days and fasted and prayed. Matthew, who at once left his occupation and followed Jesus. Therefore we read in the "Following of Christ;" "He who wishes to arrive at an interior and spiritual life must with Jesus go away from the crowd, for, as a fish soon dies out of the water, so he who spends no time in solitude, is soon distracted and defiled."

Live, therefore, during Lent as retired as is compatible with your state of life, and avoid company and entertainments, particularly places and persons that heretofore have been an occasion of scandal to you. If it costs you some self-denial, think of Jesus, who for the love of us spent forty days in the desert.

2. *That we ascend a mountain.* Not in this world must we seek the heavenly and spiritual transfiguration of our soul, but above, in the heavenly regions; and all who wish to see God must not content themselves with a powerless wish, but must, with an active love for heavenly things, always strive for the things above. He who is truly converted longs for those things. It is true, he lives in the world, but not with the world; he has no inordinate love for it; he enjoys pleasure sometimes, but only a lawful and becoming one; he possesses land and money, but he sets not his heart and affections upon them; in a word, he says with the Apostle: "The time is short; it remaineth that they also who have wives, be as if they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as if they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed

not; And they that use this world, as if they used it not: for the fashion of this world passeth away."—*I. Cor.* 7: 29-31.

3. *That we ascend a high mountain.* The higher a mountain, the more difficult it is to ascend it. Penance is a high, rugged mountain; it involves labor and demands sacrifices. It is always arduous to renounce sin, to which we are inclined by nature, because the devil and the world throw every kind of obstacle in the way of conversion. Not a few sinners are obliged to root up old, deeply-seated, inveterate habits, and what is more difficult than this? "If the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots, you also may do well when you have learned evil."—*Jerem.* 13: 23. "Habitual sin," says St. Jerome, "fetters the spirit, and it can no longer rise to do what is right. It tries, and fails, for when it voluntarily perseveres, it involuntarily yields to compulsion." St. Anselm once saw a child who for the sake of amusement had fastened a thread to a bird's foot. The bird flew into the air, but was always drawn back by the child. The Saint looked on with a sad countenance, compassionating the poor bird. Finally the thread broke and the bird flew off. The child commenced to cry, but the Saint laughed, and was rejoiced. His companions wondered at the behavior of the holy bishop, but he said to them: "Did you see the boy playing with the bird? Know that the devil plays with many people in the same way, for when he has once tied them with his ropes, he usually draws them at his pleasure from one sin to another." Many who are addicted to impurity, injustice, drunkenness, and cursing, know their unhappy state, and frequently sigh and moan, saying: "Oh, that I were once again free from this wretched habit." They sometimes make an attempt, like the bird, to fly into the air and earnestly to amend their lives, but what does it profit them? They are bound. The devil draws them back to their former sins, and they are not freed until the grace of God overcomes the bad habit. Let every sinner, especially the habitual sinner, ask himself if it is not so. To do penance is indeed to ascend a high, precipitous mountain. Let every sinner consider that if he does not ascend this high mountain, he must descend into the precipice of hell. Either ascend or descend, either go up or down.

PART II.

Jesus took with him three companions, Peter, James, and John. We also need these three companions in order to ascend the mountain of the spiritual transfiguration, or penance. What do the three Apostles symbolize? Peter, the rock upon which the

Church is built, signifies *faith;* James, who was the first among the Apostles that obtained the crown of martyrdom, *hope*; and John, whom the Lord loved, *charity*. Our companions must be—

1. *Faith.* Faith is necessary for true repentance and reconciliation with God, because without it we are entirely separated from God, and by means of it we first approach him; wherefore the Apostle says: "Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he that cometh to God must believe.—*Heb.* 11 : 6. It is faith that convinces us of the necessity of penance and offers us the strongest motives for penance. It tells us: "Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish."—*Luke* 13 : 3. "Be penitent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."—*Acts* 3 : 19. It directs us to God, who, in his infinite mercy, is ready to forgive even the greatest sinner who does penance; but he condemns without mercy all the impenitent. It proposes the highest motives to us; to the good, an eternity of joys, which it represents as a marriage-feast, a kingdom, a heaven, a paradise, where delights and joys shall be without end in the sight and enjoyment of God; and an eternity of torments for the wicked, which it represents as a *gehenna* of fire, a place of darkness, of weeping and gnashing of teeth. But because many sinners have lost their faith, or are weak in it, and do not take to heart its truths, only a few of them truly repent and do penance. Oh, that faith may again become living in the hearts of all, to prepare for them the path of penance!

2. *Hope.* Represent to yourselves a sinner who has lost all hope of obtaining forgiveness of his sins; can he be converted while in that state? No. And why not? Because he considers conversion useless. He will say within himself: "Why should I trouble myself to do penance, since I cannot hope for forgiveness from God?" Such an unfortunate sinner will remain impenitent; he may, perhaps, to escape remorse of conscience, take his own life, like Judas and deliver himself up to eternal damnation before his time. How necessary, then, for repentance is hope! It is hope that rescues man from despair, encourages him, and inspires him with confidence, and impels him to save his soul by penance. Was is not hope that animated Mary Magdalen to go to Jesus, and to obtain the forgiveness of her sins? Was is not hope that gave courage to the penitent thief on the cross to say to the dying Saviour: "Lord, remember me when thou shalt come into thy kingdom;" whereupon he heard the answer: "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise." Was is not hope in the goodness of his father that nerved the prodigal son, humble and contrite, to return to his father's house?

3. *Charity.* By its very nature it is essential to a reconciliation with God. As long as the sinner is indifferent about God and has no desire to please him, or to labor for him, or belong to him; so long as he thinks of God as one with whom he has nothing to do, views him as a stranger, as one far removed and not concerned in him or his affairs, true conversion and consequently forgiveness of sin is out of the question. The man's mind is wholly perverted. Not only has he no love, no fear of God, he does not even recognize him as his Creator. God has no place at all in his life or thoughts. He may not deny the existence of God; he knows or he believes that God exists. But what of that? Such knowledge or faith will avail him little. Hence St. Augustine says: "The faith of the Christian must be united with charity; the devil also has faith without charity." It is charity that impels the sinner to do penance, for "love is strong as death."—*Canticle* 8: 6. What is earthly love not capable of doing? What does not man undertake to gratify his ambition, covetousness, and carnal lust, or his desire of revenge? To what dangers does he not expose himself, what difficulties does he not overcome, what obstacles does he not surmount? And what will heavenly and divine love not be able to accomplish? Oh, if it once rule in the heart of the sinner, he will experience the most bitter pain and grief for his misdeeds; he will break with a strong hand the fetters of sin; and, full of contrition, implore mercy and grace. He will be ready to die rather than offend God any more. Example: Mary Magdalen. She tears herself from the companions of her sin, hastens to Jesus, rushes into the dining-hall, where many guests are assembled, disregards their rash judgment, throws herself down before Jesus, washes his feet with her tears, and does not go away till she hears from him the consoling words: "Thy sins are forgiven thee."—*Luke* 7: 48. Oh, that this holy and divine love would fill the hearts of men; how promptly and manfully would they enter on the way of penance, and how constantly would they walk in it!

PART III.

The gospel says of the divine Saviour: *He was transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as snow.* This transfiguration is a symbol of the interior and exterior transfiguration of the true penitent.

1. True repentance changes and transform the *whole interior of man.* So long as man lives in the state of sin, his heart is turned away from God, virtue is repugnant to him, or at least indifferent; he is never occupied with the affairs of his soul, but lives in forgetfulness of salvation. He loathes all exercises of

religion, such as prayer, hearing the word of God, spiritual reading, the reception of the sacraments; he therefore either, neglects them altogether, or practices them only very seldom hastily, and without the proper sentiments. On the other hand, he is pleased with temporal and earthly things, continually entertains bad thoughts and desires, is governed by his passions, and without any scruple offends God by grievous sins. This is the interior of a sinner. But how differently minded is the true penitent! Full of contrition, love, and gratitude, he turns to God, he detests above all things the evil he has done; he is grieved most profoundly for having offended God so often and so grievously, and he is resolved never more to sin. He rejoices at virtue, and devotes himself with fervor and love to the exercises of religion.

This is the transfiguration which must be effected in the sinner who intends to be counted among true penitents. Therefore the Lord says by the prophet: "Be converted to me with all your heart, in fasting, and in weeping, and in mourning. And rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God for he is gracious and merciful, patient, and rich in mercy." —*Joel* 2: 12, 13. "Cast away from you all your transgressions by which you have transgressed, and make to yourselves a new heart and a new spirit."—*Ezech.* 18: 31. This interior change and amendment of heart was effected in all true penitents. Example: Mary Magdalen. Her going into the house of the Pharisee, her appearance before the guests, her humble silence despite their contemptuous looks, her tears which she shed lying at the feet of Jesus, gave testimony that her heart was totally changed and renewed. Let every one find out whether this change has been wrought in himself at his confessions, for, if it were wanting, his repentance may have been only an appearance and a delusion.

2. Repentance changes and transforms also *the exterior of man.* At the transfiguration of Jesus upon Mount Thabor, such a bright light streamed from his sacred body that it permeated his garments and made them as white as snow. The like may be said of repentance. The change which it produces in the interior of man soon manifests itself exteriorly in a well-regulated life. Above all, the penitent avoids those sins which he committed heretofore; he lives no longer unchastely, he avoids dissolute discourses, he refrains from drunkenness and gambling, he curses and blasphemes no more. He practices with fervor the good which he formerly neglected, he goes to church regularly, assists devoutly at divine worship, and frequently approaches the Sacraments of Confession and Communion. His whole conduct is prudent, he walks in the fear of God, and gives good example. Every one who knew him before must say of him: "He is a different man altogether from what he was; he is totally

changed" It is true, even the true penitent may sin again, and sin grievously, but it happens only very seldom; as a rule, even when he does fall he does not long remain in the state of sin, but aided by the grace of God, rises again; reconciles himself anew with God, and walks more cautiously and zealously in the way of penance. All true penitents do this. If persons after confession always relapse into their former sins and show no amendment, it is an evident sign that they are not true penitents.

PERORATION.

You are aware now how you can attain spiritual transfiguration, that is, true repentance and reconciliation with God. Go apart, avoid the frivolous company of the sinful world, look upwards, disengage your heart from all inordinate love of earthly things, and spare no sacrifice which a true conversion may demand, for this is a question of the salvation of your immortal soul. Take, then, for your companions the three divine virtues, *faith*, *hope*, and *charity*; change your character by renewing yourselves interiorly and eyteriorly, and by amending your lives. Employ the present holy season of Lent for your spiritual transfiguration that it may become to you a time of grace and salvation. Amen

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SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

6. MORAL SKETCH.

IT IS GOOD TO BE IN HEAVEN.

Peter said to Jesus: *Lord, it is good for us so be here.—Matt.* 17: 4.

Last Sunday we found Jesus in the desert, where he fasted and prayed forty days and forty nights; to-day we see him transfigured on Mount Thabor. These two events, though distant from each other with respect to time, follow each other in the gospels selected by the Church to be read during the holy season of Lent. And not without reason has the Church so arranged them, for, by representing to us Jesus fasting and praying in the desert, she shows him to us as a model to be imitated by us during this holy time; and by representing him to us to-day in his transfiguration, she directs our attention to the

reward in view, which will most assuredly be ours, provided we diligently employ this time in the exercise of mortification and prayer. We may then hope to see the Triune God in his infinite glory in heaven, and full of rapture, we shall cry out: *Lord, it is good for us to be here.*

The thought of the joys of heaven should encourage us to spend the holy season of Lent according to the ordinance of the Church, in a spirit of compunction and penance. But not only during Lent, but at all times, we should call to mind the joys of heaven, and particularly—

I. In all our works;
II. In all our sufferings.

PART I.

We have a double task upon earth, one that refers to our *eternal*, and the other, to our *temporal* life. That in both these tasks we may fulfil our duties, let us remember that it is good to be in heaven.

1. *Labor for eternal life.*

(*a.*) This consists, above all, in a faithful performance of our religious duties. But religion obliges us to keep the commandments of God and the precepts of his Church, and to avail ourselves of the means for our purification and sanctification. The person who does what God, and in his name the Church prescribes, who keeps the ten commandments of God and the six precepts of the Church, who prays, hears the word of God, and frequently receives the sacraments worthily, that person labors for eternal life. But he who violates this or that commandment of God and of the Church, and is careless in the employment of the means of salvation, belongs to the class of people who are standing idle in the market-place of the world, and can not hope in the evening of life to receive the wages of laborers in the vineyard of the Lord.

(*b.*) Alas, there are many who do not labor for eternal life. They do not keep the commandments, and yet, "If thou wilt enter into life," says Christ, "keep the commandments." Or can it be called keeping the commandments of God to break out frequently into curses and blasphemies, to desecrate Sundays and holidays by gross sins, to be disobedient to parents, and to grieve them, to live in enmity with our fellow-creatures for months and years, to yield to the base vice of impurity, and to commit fraud and injustice in our transactions with others?

Can any such, or can slanderers, or calumniators be said to keep the commandments? Can it be called keeping the precepts of the Church to eat meat on Fridays and other days of abstinence, to neglect to hear mass on Sundays and holidays, to keep away from confession and communion, and even at Easter not to receive the holy sacraments, or to receive them unworthily? Can it be called availing themselves of the means of grace, if prayer, hearing the word of God, or catechetical instruction and spiritual reading be as a thorn in their side? Oh, many, very many do not labor for eternal life.

(*c.*) How shall we account for this? They hardly ever think of heaven, they never say to themselves: *It is good to be in heaven.* They do not consider what a great good heaven is, what unspeakable happiness the saints enjoy there; they have therefore no desire for heaven, and because they do not long for heaven, they do not do what is required for heaven. What will be the feelings of such worldly persons when, sooner or later, they are face to face with eternity? If Esau wept so bitterly over the loss of his birthright and of his father's blessing, which he had bartered for a mess of pottage, will not those persons have much more reason to weep when they realize that they have bartered their glorious and everlasting birthright of heaven's joys for the miserable, transitory pleasures of this word? We need not wonder that there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, for they are compelled to say: "We have lost heaven for fleeting, vain, and perishable things." Never, therefore, lose sight of those unfading glories of the heavenly Jerusalem. Say frequently to yourselves: "God has created me for heaven, not for this miserable earth; therefore I shall labor for heaven." If you be tempted to sin, say to yourselves: "How could I be so foolish as to lose heaven on account of this or that sin?" Say every morning: "I will endeavor to-day in all things to do the will of God, that I may merit heaven, *for it is good to be there.*"

2. *Labor for the temporal life.*

(*a.*) *It is good to be in heaven.* This must be your favorite maxim in all your temporal business and labor. To work is a commandment of God: "Man is born to labor, and the bird to fly."—*Job.* 5: 7. God himself said to Adam: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread."—*Gen.* 3: 19. It would be a great error to think that you must toil only to earn your daily bread. No, every one must work, the rich and the poor, the high and the low, for labor is prescribed, not only as a means of gaining a livelihood in the world, but also for the service of God and the attainment of our eternal salvation. Those that do not work when they can,

neglect an essential duty of religion, and have reason to fear that they will share hereafter the lot of the unprofitable servant.

(*b.*) But that our labor may be meritorious for eternal life, it must be performed in the *state of grace and with a good intention.* They who labor hard from the beginning of the year to the end thereof, but live in the state of sin, need not expect a reward hereafter. The same holds good of labors that are not done with a good intention. They who in their labor turn their eyes away from God and have their temporal interest solely in view, for example, the gaining of their livelihood or the gratification of their passions, have no part in the service of God, nor can they lay any claim to a reward in eternity. A Saint once had a wonderful vision. He saw that the souls of the departed appeared before the judgment-seat of God and that their works were weighed in the balance of divine justice. Among many others a man came loaded down with a huge bundle of good works. The Saint thought: "Now the bundle will fall heavily into the balance and the carrier will surely go straight to heaven. "But, lo, when the bundle was put in the balance it proved to be as light as a feather, and the balance flew up. And why? Because the bundle contained good works which had been performed in a state of sin and without a good intention.

See then that you are not wanting in the balance; and that your works do not resemble a bundle light as a feather. Labor in the state of grace and with a good intention. That this may be done, let us frequently say to ourselves: *It is good to be in heaven.* If we consider that by means of our daily labors we can merit heaven with its unspeakable joys, we shall certainly exert ourselves to perform them in such a manner that we may obtain the desired end.

PART II.

"A heavy yoke is upon the children of Adam, from the day of their coming out of their mother's womb, unto the day of their burial into the mother of all."—*Ecclus.* 40: 1. And so, indeed, there is. Without pain no one lives upon earth, and without tribulation no one goes out of the world. *A pious life involves* many *pains;* moreover, we meet with *other tribulations.* But that we may be able to bear all disagreeable things patiently and perseveringly, let us think of our maxim, *It is good to be in heaven.*

1. *The pains and hardships of a pious life.*

(*a.*) Christ said not in vain: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away."—*Matt.* 11: 12. He who

wishes to live in such a manner as to justify a well-grounded hope that he will one day be admitted to the kingdom of God, must daily mortify himself and subdue his evil inclinations and sinful desires. He is variously and constantly tempted. At one time it is anger that boils over and threatens to burst all bounds; at another a moody reflection on some real or fancied injury, prompting emotions of hatred and revengeful desires; then unchaste thoughts; again, self-complacency or covetousness, or too great a longing after honor and praise. All these inordinate motions and desires must be struggled against and suppressed, else they will not only be sinful in themselves, but will also afford the occasion of many sins. But the contest with and the conquering of these enemies of our salvation is a difficult work, and involves many sacrifices. The holy Fathers and spiritual writers therefore call the Christian who conquers himself a greater hero than the general who takes fortresses by storm and subdues mighty kingdoms; nay, they do not hesitate to say that continual mortifications and self-denial are an unbloody martyrdom, which, in merit, can worthily be placed in juxta-position with actual martyrdom itself. Our interior enemies have confederates without, the devil with his endless temptations, and the world with its scandals, bad examples and persecutions, which are no less aggravating.

(*b.*) What shall we do to overcome all these difficulties and obstacles in the way of virtue? We must look up to heaven and frequently say to ourselves: *It is good to be in heaven.* Consider all that worldly people do and endure in order to enjoy life. How much trouble they take! If, for the sake of vain and perishable goods, they undergo so many hardships and privations, should we be deterred by the hardships which heaven demands—heaven with all its ineffable, eternal joys? What supported St. Paul, the holy martyrs, and other saints, in all the persecutions and tribulations which they were obliged to suffer for the sake of Christ? What but the remembrance of the reward in heaven? "Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you untruly, for my sake; Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven."—*Matt.* 5: 11, 12.

2. *Other sufferings.*

Many are languishing in poverty and need, and have no other prospect than to live and die poor. How many cares and tribulations children cause their parents. How many annoyances are to be met with at your daily work, in the household, everywhere; whether you be a laborer, a tradesman, or in a profession, it is all the same. There is no state of life that has not its hard-

ships, and no man without his cross. The earth on which we live is, as it were, a cemetery, in which one cross stands in close proximity to another, a land upon which, since the fall of Adam, the curse of God rests, a valley of tears. "Great labor is created for all men."—*Eccles.* 40: 1. "Man born of a woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries."—*Job* 14. 1.

In all these sufferings and tribulations what is there to inspire us with courage and give us strength to persevere in patience? What else but the maxim: *It is good to be in heaven.* When the life of Theodosius the Abbot was drawing near its close he suffered a most painful sickness, which he endured with heroic patience. A sympathizing friend advised him to ask of God the alleviation of his sufferings. "Oh, no," replied the Saint, "such a prayer would be a sign of impatience, and would deprive me of my crown." He was obliged to suffer on for a whole year before falling quietly asleep in our Lord. St. Teresa frequently repeated the words, "Lord, either to suffer or to die." St. Rose of Lima, in the midst of the greatest torture, cried out: "More yet, O Lord, more yet! Do thy will in me, add pain to pain, but increase also my patience." How can we account for this patience and fortitude in sufferings? By the maxim, *It is good to be in heaven.* Heaven, they said, is worth suffering for. They comforted themselves with the words of the Apostle: "For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory."—*II. Cor.* 4: 17.

PERORATION.

In all *your toil* and *sufferings* say frequently: *It is good to be in heaven.* If you always have heaven with its joys before your eyes, you will certainly fulfil your duties conscientiously in every respect; you will also be solicitous to perform them in the state of grace and with a good intention, that they may please God and become meritorious for eternal life. Looking forward thus to heaven will also encourage you to bear the hardships of the service of God and the tribulations of this life. This should be your maxim: *It is good to be in heaven.* With this maxim on your lips and in your heart you will be emboldened to dare and to do, to toil and to suffer, and finally to merit heaven, where with Peter and all the elect you can exclaim throughout all eternity, *It is good to be here.* Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

7. MORAL SKETCH.

WE MAY HAVE A HEAVEN UPON EARTH.

His face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as snow.—Matt. 17: 2.

Who would be able to describe the joy and transport of the Apostles who were deemed worthy to behold Jesus in his transfiguration upon the holy mountain? Their joy and felicity was so great that Peter, entirely beside himself in ecstasy, cried out: *Lord, it is good for us to be here.* Forgetting everything in the world, he had only one wish, to remain always upon the mountain, near his transfigured Saviour.

So long as we live in this world it is not given to us to behold Jesus in the splendor of his divine majesty, and, as it were, to be caught up into heaven. Nevertheless, it is possible for us to have a foretaste of that beatitude which the saints enjoy in heaven; we, may to quote a common saying, *have a heaven upon earth,* as I will show to-day at some length, if we—

I. Have a good conscience;
II. Resign ourselves to the will of God;
III. And live in peace and concord.

PART I.

1. A good conscience *seasons our enjoyments, facilitates our labors, and comforts us in tribulations and sufferings.* How merry, how joyful are innocent little children when they are playing and amusing themselves! Their play, insignificant as it is affords them greater pleasure than that derived by grown persons from most costly enjoyments. Many a one says: "Oh, for the return of those happy days! Often does my mind revert to those happy reminiscences of my childhood's innocent days. Alas! I can no longer be as merry as a child!" But why are children so merry? Because they are innocent and have not yet drunk of the bitter chalice of sin. We may often hear the poor woodman sing his merry songs. Who has not seen the dust-begrimed laborer, bucket in hand, wending his way to his humble cottage, there

to eat with cheerful countenance, and surrounded by dear little ones, his frugal meal? Whence comes this happy expression of countenance? From a good conscience. "He who has a good conscience," says St. Chrysostom, "is in the most oppressing circumstances much happier and more content than others who are deprived of this good in the midst of riches."

2. Add to this, that the joy which comes from a good conscience is *not changeable*. Solomon compares a good conscience to a continual feast.—*Prov.* 15 : 15. Who does not admire Job in his trials? He loses his flocks, a storm demolishes his houses and burns his sons and daughters amidst their ruins; he is reduced from abundance to the most abject poverty, he is covered with leprosy, derided and calumniated by his own wife, yet he remains patient and resigned to God in all vicissitudes; though he lost all, he saved one thing—a good conscience; and it was this that supported him in his extreme adversity and abandonment.

3. Even in the hour or death a good conscience is a soft pillow. He that has a good conscience does not fear death; he looks cheerfully and joyfully into eternity, for faith tells him that much more excellent and precious goods there await him than the world can give. "With him that feareth the Lord, it shall go well in the latter end, and in the day of his death he shall be blessed." —*Ecclus.* 1: 13. The holy Joseph Oriolo, a Spanish priest, who, during his whole life, had ceaselessly labored for his own and his neighbor's spiritual welfare, felt that he should soon die; he therefore went to a tradesman with whom he was well acquainted, and, said: "Dear friend, please lend me a bed, that I may lie down, for I shall soon die." He lay down on the bed, and grew visibly weaker. The neighbors visited him, and lamented his sickness and the great sufferings which it caused. But he cheerfully said to them: "My dear friends, be composed, for God will raise me up again to a new life and receive me into his kingdom, where I shall praise his holy name and sing to his glory." Then he ordered four choir-boys to come with a harp and sing. When dying he joined his weak voice with theirs, his eyes fixed on the crucifix; and thus ardently longing for his Saviour, and singing, he surrendered his soul into the hands of his Redeemer on the 29th of March, 1703.

If you preserve a good conscience, you will have, in all the vicissitudes of life, and even at the hour of death, in some measure, a heaven upon earth.

PART II.

1. He who is content with his position, and lives quietly, has, so far as it is possible, a heaven upon earth. And this is truly the case with him who submits himself entirely to the will of God. Whatever God may send him, joy or sorrow, he is content; for he has what he wishes, because his will agrees in everything with the will of God. John Tauler, a most zealous servant of God, met one day a poor man, and saluted him with these words: "Good morning!" The poor man replied: "I have never yet had a bad morning." The learned man tried to amend his salutation, and said: "May the good God send you good luck." The beggar replied: "I have never yet been unlucky." Tauler thought the poor man was jesting; he therefore approached nearer and said: "I wish that all things may turn out according to your wish." "Nothing is done but what I wish, and therefore I am happy," replied the beggar. "Why," said Tauler, "are you so happy, and yet there is no one on earth who is prefectly happy? Explain yourself." The beggar solved the riddle, saying: "I said that I have never had a bad morning for I am always satisfied with my lot; I said that I had never yet been unhappy, for I have no desire for the goods of fortune, and this is my fortune. I know that I have a Father in heaven, who means well with me; therefore I praise him when hunger torments me, or when I am obliged to bear heat or cold, or when boys mock me, for I think: Father, thou willest it so; and hence I also will nothing else. Thus I always will only what God wills, and because I will what God wills, whatever happens to me, I will; and is this not the greatest good luck, that what one wills is always done?"

2. He who resigns himself to the will of God can never be disquieted or disturbed either by the present or the future.

(*a.*) *Not by the present.* There is scarcely a man in this world who has everything that he wishes, and among all of you here assembled there is certainly not one who can say: "Nothing is wanting to me, all my wishes are gratified." The consequencc is, that no man is perfectly satisfied with his present condition, and, therefore, no one feels entirely happy, nor yet perhaps entirely unhappy. But there is a means which enables us always to live quietly and contentedly—resignation to the will of God. He that resigns himself to the will of God will think: "It is the will of an infinitely wise God, to whom I submit myself, and who, in everything that he ordains, has my welfare in view. My welfare is the rule of his actions. If he strike me, it is to amend me; if he

spare me, it is for the same purpose." Thus a Christian who is resigned to the will of God is always tranquil and content.

(*b.*) *Not by the future.* Many persons feel unhappy because they direct their thoughts always to the future, and on account of what may perhaps befall them in the distant future are always full of disquietude and solicitude. Christians who are resigned to God do not fret about the future and become gray in consequence. They know that the future is decreed in the eternal councils of Providence, and that all our fears, cares, and solicitude can not change in the least what, according to the will of God, is to come. They also know "that to them that love God all things work together unto good."—*Rom.* 8: 28. They are therefore tranquil and content; and casting all their care upon the Lord, they say with David: "The Lord ruleth me, and I shall want nothing."—*Ps.* 22: 1.

Resignation to the will of God is something great and valuable, for he that resigns himself to it, knows nothing of bad humor, impatience, pusillanimity, or despondency, he is always cheerful, and possesses undisturbed peace of mind. All discontent among men proceeds from the want of resignation to the will of God. How necessary it is therefore that we resign ourselves to his holy will in all the events and occurences of life.

PART III.

1. If there be anything under the sun that can make man truly happy and cheerful, it is peace and concord. St. Augustine says: "Peace is the hilarity of the mind, the rest of the soul, the simplicity of the heart, and the bond of charity." What salt is to food, peace is to all the circumstances, ups and downs and ins and outs, of life. You have costly dishes on the table; they have no taste when they are not seasoned with salt. In like manner, let a man have everything to make him happy, plenty of money and land, prosperity in business, good health, honor and good name, if he must live continually in dissension, he can neither be content nor happy; he does not relish his food, his sleep does not refresh him, nor does he find consolation even in prayer. A sad thing to contemplate is the home of a married couple into whose house the spirit of strife has entered. As soon as they open their eyes in the morning, hatred and ill-will awake also; one will not speak kindly to the other; they talk only to quarrel and mutually to recriminate each other; the husband reviles the wife, the wife insults the husband, and then each is, either furtively

or openly, doing things to spite and torment the other. Sometimes their mutual hatred ends in an assault; they go to law, and show the world how quarrelsome married people can be, and consequently what an unhappy life they lead.

From such strife and discord follow, of course, sad consequences. In the first place, neither of the parties works with a will for the household. The business and work are neglected or done carelessly; the man, to get rid of his anger, seeks company, drinks and gambles; the woman gets disgusted with her work and lets things go as they will; the children grow up without discipline and turn out badly; and finally the whole family is broken up, according to the word of the Lord: "Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation."—*Luke* 11 : 17.

2. How different is the state of affairs in a family where peace is found and mutual affection! It is a heaven upon earth! They may not be rich in the goods of this world, yet husband and wife are content, and the children are good and well-behaved. Everything looks cheerful and pleasant, as if they had riches in abundance. When they rise in they morning they say their morning prayers together, and all go cheerfully to their work. In the evening they tell one another their experiences, what they have done, what they have earned, whom they have seen, or what they have suffered. They converse together, take counsel together as to how they shall act, so that all things may turn out well for them. Whatever they earn is common property. If God visit them with afflictions, they do not lose courage; one consoles the other; they pray, work, and suffer together, and hope in God who sends them help at the right time. If one of the family die, they naturally weep over the loss, but the thought that they have lived in peace and love with the departed member, and that in the next world they will meet again, and in sweet peace live together for ever, is a great comfort to them in their bereavement. If there be upon earth, this valley of tears, a happy life, it is when it is a peaceable one, and if there be a family that can be called happy, it is one in which peace and harmony reign.

PERORATION.

I have now shown you how you can have, as it were, a heaven upon earth. Above all things, preserve a good conscience, a tranquil mind, for, as St. Augustine says: "The joy of a good conscience is a paradise." In all the circumstances of life resign yourselves to the will of God, and pray with heart and mouth: "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." Live in peace

with your neighbors and all around you. Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land. Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God. It is in your power to have a heaven here upon earth, and what is still more, to obtain heaven hereafter. All that you are obliged to do is to preserve a good conscience, to be meek, humble, peaceable, and resigned to the will of God. Amen.



THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

EPISTLE. *Eph.* 5: 1-9. Brethren: Be ye followers of God, as most dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness. But fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not so much as be named among you, as becometh saints: nor obscenity, nor foolish talking, nor scurrility, which is to no purpose: but rather giving of thanks. For know ye this, and understand, that no fornicator, nor unclean, nor covetous persons, which is a serving of idols, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words. For because of these things cometh the anger of God upon the children of unbelief. Be ye not therefore partakers with them. For you were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord. Walk then as children of the light: for the fruit of the light is in all goodness, and justice, and truth.

1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

ON IMPURITY.

At the beginning of the epistle for this day St. Paul exhorts us to be followers of God, that is, to become conformable to God, according to the word of the divine Saviour. "Be you therefore perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."—*Matt.* 5: 48. And the reason why we should be followers of God is because we are his *most dear children.* As good children, who love their father and are loved by him, have the disposition and qualities of their father and take after him, so we as children of God must become conformable to God in our conduct. But because charity is the first and greatest precept and the bond of perfection, we must imitate him, above all in this, that *we walk in love.* The most eminent model of love is Jesus Christ, who hath loved us and

hath delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness.

After that the Apostle speaks of the vice of impurity, and shows—

I. How we sin by this vice;
II. Why we must guard against it.

PART I.

***Fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not so** much as be named among you, as becometh saints; nor obscenity, nor foolish talking, nor scurrility, which is to no purpose, but rather giving of thanks.* From these words of St. Paul it is evident that sins are committed against chastity—

1. *By fornication and all uncleanness.* To this class belong all impure actions, whether committed on one's own body, or with others, with married or single persons, with blood-relations, or persons related by marriage, or strangers, with persons of the same or of the opposite sex, or what is worse, with irrational animals. Several of these vices, especially adultery, were in the Old Law forbidden under penalty of death. "If any one commit adultery with the wife of another and defile his neighbor's wife, let them be put to death, both the adulterer and the adulteress."—*Lev.* 20: 10. If virginity be not found in a damsel, they shall cast her out of the doors of her father's house, and the men of the city shall stone her to death and she shall die, because she hath done a wicked thing in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house."—*Deut.* 22: 20, 21. If the Mosaic Law were in force to-day, many a bride who on her marriage-day wears the bridal wreath on her head, would incur the penalty of stoning. And how criminal must the vice of impurity be before God under the New Law since we Christians have sanctified bodies and are members of Christ and temples of the Holy Ghost! For this reason the Apostle wishes us to be so far removed from every kind of impurity as not to allow such sins to be even named among us, much less to defile ourselves with them. But what a great difference is there between this requirement of the Apostle and the reality? Not only grown persons, but even children, in whom we should expect the innocence of paradise, are frequently initiated into all the mysteries of impurity, and do with themselves and others wicked things which are an abomination in the eyes of God. Oh, that parents would watch more strictly over their children, and do their best, that they may not be corrupted!

2. *By obscenity, foolish talking, and scurrility.* By *obscenity* we understand, not so much immodesty in dress, looks, and conduct, as in speaking, by *foolish talking* we understand common, coarse jokes which refer to something indecent, and among the indecent cause immoderate laughter; lastly, by *scurrility, which is to no purpose,* we understand sly allusions, just enough to set the mind at work on evil fancies, words which conceal the poison of impurity, as it were, under flowers, but which frequently cause more mischief than open shamelessness and coarse joking. The Apostle forbids all these sorts of impure discourses, and justly, for—

(*a.*) *They are in themselves very sinful, because they proceed from a bad heart.* "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of a good treasure bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of an evil treasure bringeth forth evil things."—*Matt.* 12: 34, 35. He that takes no pleasure in impurity will not let a filthy word pass his lips, and even such as are infected with the vice of impurity are frequently disgusted with obscenities. From this it follows that some of those who speak unchaste words are even more corrupt in heart, and more criminal before God, than those unfortunate persons who commit acts of impurity.

(*b.*) *They are sinful because they defile and dishonor the tongue, that sanctified member of the human body.* Our tongue was sanctified in baptism, when the priest put blessed salt on it, saying: "Receive the salt of wisdom, may it be to thee a propitiation to eternal life." And when we go to communion we receive the most sacred body of Jesus Christ, with his most precious blood, soul and divinity, on our tongue. What a desecration of the tongue to abuse it by filthy talk! Is this not to sin more grievously than to desecrate the chalice which serves at mass for the consecration of the sacred blood of Jesus Christ?

(*c.*) *They are particularly sinful on account of the scandal they give.* How comes it that the vice of impurity is so prevalent, and that young and old are contaminated? Principally from filthy, immodest discourses, for by these the ignorant and innocent receive the knowledge of this vice, and the fire of unchaste love is kindled in their hearts; it is impure words and unchaste discourses that little by little banish modesty, and the fear of God, those guardian angels of holy purity, and make people shameless and irreligious, and open the way to the most shameful actions. "The tongue is indeed a little member and boasteth great things. Behold how small a fire what a great wood it kindleth"—*James* 3: 5. One impure word may be the occasion of sin for those who

hear it; these in turn corrupt others, and so on, thus spreading the evil. Hence it may happen that numberless souls are lost for all eternity owing to a single impure conversation or even a word. To those who speak unchastely the words of Jesus apply: "Woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh."—*Matt.* 18: 7. He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depths of the sea."—*Matt.* 18: 6.

Do not forget these words of Jesus. Guard against speaking unchastely before any one—especially before children and innocent persons. Avoid all association with persons who find pleasure in obscene and filthy talk; and if you can not avoid them altogether, show them at least by a serious countenance that you take no pleasure in their obscenity; call to mind the presence of God, and invoke in your hearts the protection of Jesus and Mary. Fathers and mothers, let your words and discourses be modest, and allow no unchaste conversation in your house. You must correct and rebuke any one who carries it on there. You owe this much to your children.

PART II.

St. Paul in the epistle for this day gives three reasons why we ought to guard ourselves against impurity.

1. *Impurity excludes from heaven;—For know ye this, and understand, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.* This is the fate of the unchaste; unless they repent in time they die a miserable death and lose heaven. What a loss! Reflect a moment what heaven is and what joy it offers, in order to understand to a certain extent the greatness of the loss. How much did Esau regret having sold his birthright to Jacob for a miserable mess of pottage! What sorrow and despair will seize the damned when constrained to say: "I have lost heaven for a vile, fleeting pleasure." A necessary consequence of the exclusion from heaven is eternal damnation, for the adult that does not go to heaven goes to hell." Whoremongers, etc. . . . shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone."—*Apoc.* 21: 8. There, in the abyss of hell, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, the unchaste will find their place of habitation, and suffer every moment pains compared with which all the pains and tortures of this world are as nothing, and throughout eternity they will be deprived of all hope of ever being redeemed. Oh, you unfortunate slaves of carnal lust, can you hear this without trembling?

Will the remembrance of hell not move you to shake off the disgraceful fetters and chains of voluptuousness, and to live chastely?

2. *God hates and punishes impurity.—Let no man deceive you with vain words. For because of these things cometh the anger of God upon the children of unbelief.* Many consider impurity no sin, but only a natural necessity, the gratification of which is as lawful as eating and drinking; or at most that it is only a human frailty, on which God will look with indulgence. What an error! what a delusion! If impurity be no sin, why did God give the sixth and ninth commandments? Peruse the whole of the Sacred Scriptures, and you will not find a single passage in which impurity is spoken of as lawful; on the contrary, everywhere it is represented as a vice hateful to God; a vice which is punished not only in the next world, but even in this. Examples: The people in the days of Noe, whom God, on account of the sin of impurity, swept away by the deluge: Sodom and Gomorrha, which were destroyed by a rain of fire and brimstone; and David, who, although he repented of his adultery and obtained forgiveness from God, was yet most severely chastised in this life. Now, if God deals even in this world so severely with the unchaste, who will deny that impurity is a grievous sin? And who would not flee from a vice which renders man unhappy for time and eternity?

3. *Impurity is a vice of the Gentiles, wherefore every Christian must detest and avoid it.—For you were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord. Walk then as children of light.* In other words you were once Gentiles and knew neither God nor his holy law. You then did the things after which your flesh lusted, because you knew no better; but now being Christians you are instructed, and you know that God has strictly forbidden fornication and all uncleanness. Act then according to this knowledge, that you may be able to stand before the judgment seat of God.

PERORATION.

Endeavor, then, to walk honestly, decently and chastely, and to do nothing against the chastity proper to your state of life. Although no *human* eye sees you, yet God sees you. You are afraid of the eyes of man, why not of the eyes of God? Walk in the light. Beware of scurrilous words, unchaste jokes, and immodest discourses. Think of the woe which Jesus pronounced against those who give scandal. Do not burden your souls with the crime of corrupting the innocent; their blood will be demanded at your hands, and judgment without mercy will come upon

you if you seduce others, because to them you showed no mercy. If your conscience tells you that you have contaminated yourselves by the vice of impurity, make a sincere and good confession and henceforth lead a life of penance, considering that only the clean of heart shall see God. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

GOSPEL. *Luke* 11: 14-28. At that time: Jesus was casting out a devil, and the same was dumb; and when he had cast out the devil, the dumb spoke: and the multitudes were in admiration at it: but some of them said: He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils. And others tempting, asked of him a sign from heaven. But he, seeing their thoughts, said to them: Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation, and house upon house shall fall. And if Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because you say, that through Beelzebub I cast out devils. Now if I cast out devils by Beelzebub, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if, I, by the finger of God, cast out devils, doubtless the kingdom of God is come upon you. When a strong man armed keepeth his court, those things which he possesseth are in peace. But if a stronger than he come upon him and overcome him, he will take away all his armor wherein he trusted, and will distribute his spoils. He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through places without water, seeking rest: and not finding, he saith: I will return into my house whence I came out. And when he is come, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then he goeth and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and entering in they dwell there. And the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. And it came to pass, as he spoke these things, a certain woman from the crowd, lifting up her voice, said to him: Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the paps that gave thee suck. But he said: Yea, rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it.

2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

JESUS CASTS OUT A DEVIL AND CONFUTES HIS ENEMIES.

The gospel read in the mass of to-day speaks of a man who was possessed by a devil. Our Lord had compassion on the poor man and delivered him from the devil. Did not all that were witnessess of this expulsion of the devil admire the divine power of Jesus and believe in him as the promised Redeemer of the world? Far from it; the Scribes and Pharisees took occasion from this miracle to calumniate and blaspheme him in the most malicious manner. Jesus defended himself against them and spoke with such persuasive eloquence, wisdom and power, that a woman in the crowd, lifting up her voice, called the mother blessed that had borne such a son. These in a few words are the contents of the gospel for this day, which we shall consider a little more closely. I shall divide them into three points:

I. Jesus casts out a devil;
II. He confutes his enemies;
III. He speaks of the return of the unclean spirit.

Part I.

1. *Jesus was casting out a devil, and the same was dumb.*

(*a.*) The devil that Jesus cast out was not dumb, but the man was whose tongue the devil held bound so that he could not speak a word. That the devil can incorporate himself in man, and act out of him and in him, is a truth which the Sacred Scripture and history most clearly attest.—*Matt.* 4: 24—8: 16; *Mark.* 1: 32; *Acts* 19: 13.

(*b.*) It is also certain that the evil spirits can injure men in their body and temporal goods so far as God permits. Proofs of this are Job; the seven husbands of Sara; also the lunatic referred to by St. Matthew (17: 14).

(*c.*) God permits people to be injured by evil spirits, either to punish them for their sins, or to try their virtue. The former was the case with the seven husbands of Sara, and the latter with Job. In the Lives of the Saints we meet with many examples in which these holy servants of God suffered greatly from evil spirits.

(*d.*) To protect ourselves against the assaults of the devil we must avoid all sins, especially impurity and blasphemy. In houses in which impurity is committed, or in which there is much cursing and blaspheming, the devil frequently does a great deal of injury. In such houses the benedictions and exorcisms of the Church prove ineffectual, unless sin and vice be cast out.

(*e.*) The man was *dumb.* This was, indeed, a deplorable state, yet it had its advantages, for he could commit no sin with his tongue, and moreover, if he bore his misfortune with patience, he had an opportunity of paying the penalty due to his sins and of acquiring merit for heaven.

(*f.*) Far worse is *spiritual dumbness.* To the spiritually dumb belong those who will not speak with God, that is, who do not pray; those who conceal their sins in confession, or their number and circumstances, and lastly, those who keep silence regarding the sins of others which they should denounce and correct; as parents, brothers and sisters. Examine yourselves and see whether you have not been spiritually dumb in one way or another.

2. *And when he had cast out the devil, the dumb spoke.* What did he say first. There can be no doubt that he thanked our Lord and praised him with a loud voice. Do likewise; show yourselves grateful for the many material and spiritual benefits which you daily receive from him. The man would have acted very sinfully if, instead of thanking Jesus, he had blasphemed him. But this very thing those Christians do who abuse their body and its members, their health and other temporal goods, by offending God. And there are many such.

3. *And the multitude were in admiration at it.* The poor, illiterate people who were witnesses of the miracle recognized in it the work of God; they believed in Jesus. It was always so. Generally it was the poor people that adhered to Jesus. Three hundred years elapsed before an emperor embraced Christianity. And who are they that now-a-days cling firmly to Jesus and his Church? Again, the poor people. Thus the words of Jesus are verified: "The poor have the gospel preached to them."—*Matt.* 11: 5. Only those who are humble have a heart susceptible to the grace of faith; the proud despise this grace and pursue in imaginary wisdom the ways of error and perdition. Our own times prove this, alas, too well.

Part II.

1. *Some of them said: He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils.* What did the Scribes and Pharisees do to efface the impression this miracle had made upon those present, and to weaken their faith in Jesus? They misinterpreted it, saying: He has cast out a devil, it is true; not, however, by the power of God, but by the aid of Beelzebub, the prince of devils, with whom he is in compact. This casting out of the devil served the Scribes and Pharisees as a means of lowering him in the estimation of the people, and of rendering him odious. This is envy. If it can not deny what is good in a neighbor, it misrepresents it, and when it can do naught else suggests an unworthy motive. Thus the best actions are distorted and made to appear evil. Let this abominable passion of envy never reign in your hearts.

Consider that envy destroys the image of God in the soul and imprints the ugly image of the devil. Be well-disposed towards all men, especially towards your immediate neighbors and those who occupy the same station in life that you do; wish them well from your hearts, judge and speak well of them, cover their faults with the mantle of charity and cheerfully do them acts of kindness.

2. *Others tempting, asked of him a sign from heaven.* How great their insolence! They were witnesses of the public miracle which Jesus had just performed on the dumb man. There is also no doubt that many other miracles of his were known to them, nevertheless they asked of him a sign from heaven. They did not ask this sign of him as a proof of his divine mission or Messianic character in order to believe in him, but rather to tempt him, to defy him and to challenge him. Consider that you also tempt God when you present petitions to him which in his wisdom he cannot grant you; for example, if you ask him to admit you into heaven without doing violence to yourselves; or to be freed from temptations without avoiding the occasions of sin; to obtain the virtues of humility, temperance, patience, prudence, purity, or any other, without employing the necessary means. If you ask God for anything, comply with the rules of faith and fulfil the conditions on which the hearing of your prayer depends.

3. Here were two classes of persons in the presence of Jesus —the one insisting that the miracle he had just performed was effected only through Beelzebub, the other asking him to perform more wonders, yet to be submitted to their hostile criticism and perverse interpretation. Perhaps some of these latter were only actuated like Herod by curiosity, and wished our Saviour to act the juggler before them. If so, like Herod, they were dis-

appointed. He showed no sign from heaven to amuse them. He did not even deign to answer their impertinent proposal. With regard to them and their request he was silent. But to the former class, to those who accused him of working miracles by the power of Beelzebub, he does reply, and in a few words not only repels the accusation, but proves the absurdity of their blasphemy. He said:

(*a.*) *Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation, and house upon house shall fall. And if Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because you say, that through Beelzebub I cast out devils.* The meaning is this: No kingdom, no family in which union and harmony are wanting, can stand. Just as little could the kingdom of the evil spirits stand if they were in strife one with another. And this would really be the case if I should cast out devils in Beelzebub, the prince of the devils; for Beelzebub would be in strife with the other evil spirits, which strife would cause the downfall and dissolution of their kingdom. But since the evil spirits do not destroy their kingdom, but rather endeavor to preserve and confirm it, there can be no dissension among them, and it is an absurdity to assert that Beelzebub is in compact with me and assists me in casting out devils.

(*b.*) *Now if I cast out devils by Beelzebub, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges.* According to the account of Flavius Josephus, there were among the Jews those who, by the invocation of the name of God, by the use of some herbs or even of the name of Jesus, cast out devils, or at least asserted that they did so. Alluding to these, Jesus says: If your adherents cast out devils, you attribute it unhesitatingly to the omnipotence of God; how then can you deny that I, by the finger of God, that is, by his power, cast out devils? Is it not blind hatred and partiality to acknowledge one and the same action in your friends as a divine work, and in me to brand it as the work of the devil?

How often do passion, pride, prejudice and sensual love bring men to this; in one man they excuse and sanction what in another they bitterly reprehend and discountenance! Beware of all partiality and "pass a just judgment."—*Jerem.* Parents particularly should avoid in their conduct towards their children even the appearance of partiality; they should treat all alike, for the contrary might draw terrible consequences after it. Witness: Joseph's brothers.

(*c.*) By the words: *But if I, by the finger of God, cast out devils, doubtless the kingdom of God is come upon you,* Jesus proves to the

Jews that he is truly the Messias, and that he has already founded his kingdom, that is, his Church. It was the task of the promised Redeemer to destroy the kingdom of Satan, that is, the kingdom of error and sin, and to establish in its stead the kingdom of God, to wit, the kingdom of truth and virtue. Now, as he worked against the devil, cast him out and destroyed his influence, he evidently showed himself to be the Founder of the new kingdom, namely, that of the Messias and Redeemer of the world. This is to-day a palpable sign of the truth and divinity of the holy Catholic Church, that she has power over the devil, casts him out, und destroys his influence. And as no other denomination has the power to do this, it is evident that not one of them is the true Church established by Christ.

(*d.*) *When a strong man armed keepeth his court, those things which he possesseth are in peace. But if a stronger than he come upon him and overcome him, he will take away all his armor wherein he trusted, and will distribute his spoils. He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathered not with me, scattereth.* The devil, Jesus says, was up to this time the prince of the world and possessed it in peace; he trusted in his armor, *unbelief and sin,* by means of which he kept the people in his power. But I am far stronger than he, and I shall overcome him. I shall take away his armor, *unbelief and sin,* and through my disciples take from him the nations that served him. Then every one will see that the devil is not with me, but against me, since he will not gather and convert with me, but scatter, pervert, and drag souls to perdition.

These words of Jesus have been fulfilled during more than eighteen hundred years, and will be fulfilled without interruption to the end of time. The holy Catholic Church is always combating the devil and his adherents, but after a struggle more or less severe she always conquers him and extends her limits further and further, increasing the number of her children from year to year. How thankful we ought to be that from our infancy we have belonged to the Catholic Church! Let us show our gratitude for this grace by not forgetting that much will be demanded of him to whom much has been given, and by fulfilling conscientiously our duties as Catholics.

PART III.

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through places without water, seeking rest; and not finding, he saith: I will return into my house whence I came out. And when he is come, he findeth is swept and garnished. Then he goeth and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and entering in they

dwell there. And the last state of that man becomes worse than the first.

In this passage, in which Jesus speaks of the return of the devil, reference is made, first, to *the Jews*, and secondly, to *re lapsing sinners.*

1. By sin, all men had come into the power of the devil; but God chose the Jews for his people and withdrew them from the dominion of the devil; and Satan walked through places without water, that is among the Gentiles. But when these were converted to Christianity, he could not remain among them; *he returned to the house whence he had gone out*, namely, *to the Jews. He found them swept*, to wit, without faith in Jesus and without obedience to him, and *garnished* with sanctimoniousness, pride, self-conceit and imaginary justice. They were a fit dwelling for him; he therefore returned to them, but no longer alone, but with seven other spirits more wicked than himself. The Jews by their obstinate unbelief and perversity offered a commodious dwelling-place, not only for one, but for many evil spirits. By this return of the devil with his companions, the latter state of the Jews became worse than the former—worse than it was before they were called to be the chosen people. They now fell into blindness and obstinacy of the intellect, into lukewarmness and obduracy of the heart. Their conversion to Christianity became almost an impossibility, and in that sad state they remain to this day.

2. What Jesus here says of the Jews is also applicable to *relapsing sinners*. As long as a man lives in the state of sin he is in the power of the devil. But if he be converted the devil must depart from him and surrender dominion over him to the Holy Ghost. But let us not believe that the devil gives up the converted man entirely, and cares no more about him; no, he returns, and endeavors to make him relapse and to get him into his power again. He succeeds if the heart of the converted be swept and garnished, that is, if in it all heavenly thoughts and good resolutions have vanished, and vanity and a worldly spirit have settled there. By saying that the devil takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself and enters into the heart of man to dwell there, he declares that the spiritual condition of one, who, having formerly been a sinner, was by God's mercy made penitent, and through penance restored to God's grace and love, but then fell away again, turning his back on God and plunging into his former sins and excesses, is incomparably worse than it was before he was withdrawn from sin and the sweetness of grace and holy compunction was made known to

him. For he who relapses into his former sins, loses more and more the fear of God, he grows more careless, and by-and-by gets into such a state that he thinks nothing of sin, and finally falls into blindness and obstinacy. Repeated relapses beget a bad habit, which becomes a second nature, and makes a real and lasting conversion almost an impossibility. Such a relapsing sinner therefore is in the greatest danger of losing his soul; it is much to be feared that he will remain impenitent and perish eternally. How true are the words of Jesus!—*The last state of that man becomes worse than the first.* Guard yourselves against a relapse into sin. If you have the misfortune to fall into grievous sin, make a good confession at once and walk cautiously, that you may not relapse again.

PERORATION

At the conclusion of the gospel the evangelist relates that a woman, full of admiration at what she had heard and seen, cried out that that mother was blessed who had borne and reared such a son. Jesus approved that praise, saying: *Yea, rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it,* for who ever kept the word of God with a fidelity equal to that of his Blessed Mother? Truly Mary is blessed, but not so much for the dignity of her maternity as for her fervor in hearing the word of God and keeping it. Behold what value the word of God has! If we love to hear it and conscientiously keep it, Jesus will call us blessed, as he did his Mother. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

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3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

CONTRITION.

Jesus was casting out a devil.—Luke 11:14.

The miracle of the casting out of the devil, which, as the gospel for this day informs us, Jesus performed, is to be repeated in a moral sense in all sinners during the time of Easter. The devil must must be cast out, that the Holy Ghost with his grace may dwell in their hearts. This miracle really takes place when we make a good

confession. But what is the principal requisite for a good confession? *Contrition*, which consists in an interior sorrow, with a detestation of the sins committed. It is of all the parts which belong to the Sacrament of Penance the most necessary. If contrition were wanting, neither mortal nor venial sin could be forgiven. No sinner has ever yet received the forgiveness of his sins without true contrition.

Of *contrition*, the second requisite for the worthy reception of the holy Sacrament of Penance, I shall speak to-day and explain to you—

I. What qualities it must have in order that our sins may be remitted;
II. What we must do in order to obtain true contrition.

PART I.

Contrition, that it may obtain for us the remission of sin, must be *interior, universal* and *supernatural.*

1. *Interior.* That contrition must be *interior,* is evident from its definition; for it is a sorrow of the soul and a detestation of the sins committed. A merely external manifestation of sorrow and detestation for sins would be hypocrisy, but not contrition. Contrition must be interior because all sins proceed from the heart. We say nothing wrong without having first willed it; the will, the heart, is always the first to turn away from God and God's law; after that follows the sin in word or deed. If God is to forgive us our sins, he must require, before all else, that our will, which had turned away from him by sin, should, by repenting of it, be turned to him again. The word of God also demands that contrition shall be interior. "Be converted to me with all your hearts; . . . rend your hearts and not your garments."—*Joel* 2: 12, 13. Make to yourselves a new heart and a new spirit."—*Ezech.* 18: 31. "A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit; a contrite and humbled heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."—*Ps.* 50: 19.

It does not suffice to make an act of contrition merely with the mouth, or with words; we must have it in the heart. It is not, however, necessary that contrition should cause the feelings to be deeply moved. It suffices that we hate and detest sin above all things, and are ready to be deprived of every good and to be afflicted with every evil rather than offend God again by a mortal sin.

2. *Universal.* We must be sorry for all the *mortal sins* we have committed. By every mortal sin we turn ourselves entirely away

and separate ourselves from God; we say in effect: Though God forbids this under penalty of his eternal displeasure, I do not care what he forbids, and I shall do it. As in sinning in this way we deliberately preferred the pleasure or gain to God, and turned from him to embrace sin, so in repentance we must turn from sin and cast it from us to return to God. In other words, we must be sorry for sin, otherwise a union and reconciliation with God can not take place. By every sin we deserve the displeasure and indignation of God; we can not therefore obtain the grace and love of God if we be not sorry for every mortal sin. By every mortal sin we lose sanctifying grace, and the inheritance of heaven; we therefore remain deprived of sanctifying grace and the inheritance of heaven if we have not contrition for every mortal sin. Hence God says by the prophet: "If the wicked do penance for *all* his sins which he hath committed, and keep *all* my commandments, and do judgment and justice, living he shall live, and shall not die."—*Ezech.* 18: 21.

Therefore whoever is not sorry for all his mortal sins, makes a bad confession. It is not, however, necessary to make a special act of contrition for each individual mortal sin; it suffices that we are sorry for them all, known and unknown. It is advisable, however, to make an act of contrition expressly for any particular sin to which we have been addicted. By so doing our contrition is likely to become more perfect; it will reach to and more thoroughly eradicate that sin, and our resolution of amendment will be laid on firmer and deeper foundations.

Concerning *venial* sins, it is not necessary to be sorry for all of them, or for any one in particular; if accompanied with mortal sin we may receive the Sacrament of Penance validly without any contrition for them. The reason is because venial sins only weaken, but do not entirely destroy sanctifying grace and the love of God. If therefore at confession we are sorry only for grievous sins, we receive the Sacrament of Penance validly and worthily. But, if a person has only venial sins to confess, and is not sorry for one of them at least, he would make an invalid and sacrilegious confession, because contrition is an essential part of the Sacrament of Penance, and therefore he who has no contrition receives the Sacrament uworthily.

It is very advisable that persons who are conscious only of venial sins since their last confession, especially if it be doubtful whether they have sufficient contrition for them, should renew their sorrow for a mortal sin previously committed and already confessed, and include it in the confession. If the penitent should not be conscious of having committed even a venial sin since his last confession, he is obliged to be sorry for a sin already confessed whether mortal or venial, and to confess it, so that the priest may have matter for absolution.

3. *Supernatural.* Contrition is supernatural when we are sorry for our sins, not on account of their natural evil consequences, but from a supernatural motive, because thereby we have offended God and deserved hell. If one were sorry for one's sins only from a natural motive, say, on account of a temporal loss, or from shame, or because sin is base and degrading, and unworthy of a rational being, this would be only a *natural sorrow.* Such a sorrow is good in itself, but it is not sufficient to obtain the forgiveness of sins. Examples: King Saul (*I. Kings* 15: 23, 24), King Antiochus (*I. Mach.* 6: 12, 13, and *II. Mach.* 9: 13). The reason is because those who have only a natural contrition do not hate and detest the sin as such, but only the temporal evils of sin; they are not sorry for having offended God, but only for the temporal evils which they have brought on themselves by sin; and as their heart is not yet averted from evil, God cannot forgive them. Alas! there are many sinners who have only natural contrition.

Supernatural contrition is either *perfect* or *imperfect.*

(*a.*) Contrition is *perfect* when we detest sin more than all other evils for the sole reason that thereby we have offended God, the sovereign good. Therefore if our contrition be perfect, we hate and detest our sins, not because they are hateful and detestable in themselves, or because we have thereby lost heaven and deserved hell, but because by sin we have offended God, the sovereign good. Although we have no reason to fear eternal damnation for our sins, we should nevertheless hate and detest them. Ingratitude to God the Father, who loved us from eternity, who brought us out of nothing, and still loves us as only the Almighty Creator can love his noblest work; ingratitude to God the Son, whose whole life and death is the story of his love for us written by his own divine hand; ingratitude to God the Holy Ghost, the sanctifier of our souls, he who enlightens the mind and moves the hearts of the faithful, who has bestowed so many heavenly favors upon ourselves, and who every moment preserves us in the faith, the hope, and charity of God—this ingratitude to the Eternal Triune God is the underlying motive of perfect contrition.

(*b.*) Contrition is *imperfect* when the fear of hell, or the loss of heaven, or the heinousness of sin, urges us to detest sin above all things and to offend God no more. He who has this imperfect contrition is also sorry for having offended God; he hates and detests his sins also from the bottom of his heart, but not principally because he has offended God, the sovernign good, but because he has merited the displeasure of God, lost heaven, and deserved hell. If he had not that fear of God's retributive justice, he would not hate and detest his sins above all things, for the

love of God is yet too weak within him to be capable itself of producing true contrition in his heart.

Perfect contrition evidently is better than imperfect; the latter cleanses the soul from all sin only in connection with the Sacrament of Penance; the former, on the contrary, justifies even without this Sacrament, if we have an earnest desire to confess. —*Counc. Trent, Sess.* 24 : 4.

PART II.

In order to obtain a true supernatural contrition, we must

1. *Fervently petition God for his grace,* and

2. *Earnestly consider what faith teaches concerning the malice of sin and its evil consequences.*

1. As for everything salutary for the welfare of the soul, so for true supernatural contrition we need the grace of God. But because God wishes to be asked for his graces, at least for those subsequent graces by means of which we are saved, we must pray to him to give us the grace of true contrition. The saints did so. St. Charles Borromeo every year entered into a spiritual retreat of at least eight days, in order to prepare himself for his annual confession. On the day on which he made it he spent several hours on his knees, in order to ask God for the grace of true contrition, and yet St. Charles had scarcely a venial sin to confess. It is therefore desirable not only to invoke the Holy Ghost at the beginning, but also after the examination of conscience, to beg God to give us the grace of true contrition.

2. Let us consider,

(*a.*) *The malice of sin.* God is the king of heaven and earth. A subject who rebels against his king deserves death; what does the sinner deserve who raises the standard of rebellion against his God, and with barefaced impudence says to him: "I will not serve Thee." God is goodness itself towards us and showers upon us numberless benefits; is it not the basest ingratitude towards him to return evil for his goodness and benefits? What a horrible crime the Jews committed when they crucified Jesus? What does the sinner do? He renews the crime of the Jews as often as he commits a mortal sin, for he that sins crucifies Jesus anew.—*Heb.* 6 : 6.

(*b.*) *The evil consequences of sin.* Consider how severely God punished the rebellious angels whom he cast out of heaven into

the abyss of hell; Adam and Eve, whom with their whole posterity he chastised with his indignation and tribulations of every sort; the people in the days of Noe, whom he drowned in the deluge; the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrha, whom he destroyed by fire and brimstone. Let us consider what we lose by sin. We lose by every mortal sin *sanctifying grace*, that grace purchased for us by the blood of Jesus; we lose all our previous merits as well as the supreme prerogative, obtained at our baptism, of being children of God and heirs, with his own divine Son, to the kingdom of heaven. What a loss! Lastly, let us consider what awaits the sinner. Hell. Hell with all its pains that will never end. Oh, who would not, considering all this, hate and detest sin above all things!

PERORATION.

Retain in your memory what I have told you to-day about contrition. Do all you can to obtain by the grace of God true supernatural contrition. Without contrition confession is useless —worse than useless. Without contrition, true and supernatural, no sinner can be saved. All of them that have ever been saved, have been saved by contrition, while, on the other hand, every soul in hell to-day is there for want of contrition. Let us then follow in the footsteps of the true penitents, excite ourselves at every confession—nay, daily, to a hearty sorrow for our sins, that God may pardon us here and give us as penitents a place in his kingdom hereafter. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

THE SANCTIFICATION OF LENT.

Jesus was casting out a devil, and the same was dumb.—Luke 11: 14.

The gospel for this day speaks of a demoniac, whose tongue the devil held bound, so that he could not speak a word. Our Divine Saviour cast out the devil and healed the poor man of his dumbness. In this unfortunate man the Church shows us the wretched condition of a man who by sin becomes the slave of

Satan, and she exhorts us to have recourse to Jesus like the dumb man, in order to be delivered from the power of the evil spirit, and to be healed. Let us obey the admonition of our Mother, and employ the present Lent for our reconciliation with God, since it is a time of penance. For this reason ashes were put on our forcheads and with earnest words we were called upon to bring forth fruits worthy of penance.

The forty days' fast being a time of penance, the question is, *by what exercises must we sanctify it?* I answer this question by saying we must sanctify it—

I. By corporal, and
II. By spiritual fasting.

PART I.

The corporal fast during Lent consists—

1. In *abstaining on certain days from flesh meat.* (*a.*) In early times the Christians abstained during the whole season of Lent from flesh meat, and even from such food as comes from animals, such as milk, butter, cheese and eggs. This manner of fasting lasted till the middle of the fourteenth century. In the year 1344 Pope Clement VI. made some mitigation and allowed the use of milk, butter and eggs. The faithful, however, made use of this privilege only in case of necessity, and even then, when they could not keep the Lenten fast in all its austerity, they performed in place of it other good works; they built churches, made pious bequests, and gave alms.

(*b.*) In our days this rigorous precept of fasting is no longer in force. The Church, accommodating herself to the circumstances of the times, allows the use of flesh meat during the whole season of Lent, with the exception of a few days—namely, Wednesdays and Fridays, the Saturday of Ember week, and the last four days of Holy Week. Milk, butter, cheese and eggs may also be used, but fish and flesh meat at one and the same meal are forbidden. According to the explanation of Benedict XIV., this prohibition of the use of flesh meat and fish at one and the same meal is binding under mortal sin, and extends even to the Sundays during Lent.

(*c.*) Persons outside the Church sometimes taunt us, saying that we might as well eat flesh meat as fast on such a diet. Granted, but what of it? I may get as fat on salmon as on beef; I may like my Friday's dinner even better than any other; what of that?

Why do I not eat meat then? Because the Church, without consulting me, and centuries before I was born, prohibited the use of flesh meat on certain days. And her children have observed the law, and because I am a child of the Church I, too, shall observe the law. There is no question as to the alimentary or any other value of the food. I only know that a law of the Church forbids flesh meat on a certain day. Then, either away with the Church on that day, or away with the meat. "If he will not hear the Church let him be to thee as the heathen and publican."—*Matt.* 18: 17.

The Church, however, does not without good reason forbid the use of flesh meat on certain days. Flesh meat no doubt, is a somewhat coarse, sensual food. In the beginning men ate only Lenten food.—*Gen.* 1: 29. It was only after the deluge, when mankind had begun to degenerate, that God allowed them to eat meat.—*Gen.* 9: 2, 3. Nourishment from plants is the nutriment of innocence; flesh meat is the food of sensuality and ferocity. The Church, by forbidding us the use of flesh meat on certain days, wishes to call to our mind the happy state of innocence in which man lived in paradise where, because he was innocent, he used innocent food taken from plants; and to admonish us that we should return to that happy state in which the spirit ruled over the flesh.

2. *In taking only one full meal, Sundays excepted.*

(*a.*) The Christians of the first ages observed this ecclesiastical ordinance very exactly. They ate nothing during the whole day, and took their meal only in the evening, after the setting of the sun. Nor did they drink water, unless there was a necessity. A council at Aix-la-Chapelle declares: "Only when necessity requires it, on account of hard labor or weakness, is it allowed to drink."

(*b.*) This custom of fasting, that is, to remain fasting till after sunset, existed in the Church for twelve hundred years. It was not till the thirteenth century that there was a departure from the ancient austerity, when the full meal was allowed to be taken at three o'clock in the afternoon, and in the fourteenth century, at noon. This ordinance the Church has adhered to till now, hence we are allowed daily during the forty days of Lent to take a full meal about noon. There is a small collation allowed in the evening, which is not to exceed the fourth part of an ordinary meal. The following persons are exempted from the obligation of fasting: young persons under twenty-one years of age, and old persons over sixty years of age, the sick, pregnant women, and those giving suck to infants, persons engaged in hard labor, and

all those who, through weakness, can not fast without great prejudice to their health.

Herein consists the corporal fast, which the Church during Lent enjoins on us under the penalty of mortal sin. The examples of the saints of the Old and the New Testament ought to encourage us to this fast. In the Old Law we read that Moses, David, Elias, Judith, Esther, the Machabees, fasted, and by this exercise obtained of God special graces. Jesus himself fasted forty days and forty nights in the desert; the Apostles and Christians of all periods imitated his example. And if we read the lives of the saints, we shall not find one who did not keep the prescribed. fasts, to say nothing of voluntary fasting. If therefore we wish to be good Catholics, we must conscientiously keep the ecclesiastical precept of fasting.

PART II.

The spiritual fast by which we are to sanctify the forty days' fast consists in—

1. *Renouncing sin.*

(*a.*) Fasting is good and pleasing to God and yet unprofitable, unless we join to it a penitential life. Pope Leo the Great says: "We deprive the body of food without any benefit, if we do not at the same time turn the heart from sin." We read that the Jews kept a great fast, but God regarded it not; wherefore they complained, saying: "Why have we fasted, and thou hast not regarded: have we humbled our souls, and thou hast not taken notice?" And God answered: "Behold, in the day of your fast your own will is found and you exact of all your debtors; behold, you fast for debates and strife, and strike with the fist wickedly. Do not fast as you have done . . . Loose the bands of wickedness."—*Is.* 58: 3, 4, 6. The Scribes and Pharisees also fasted fruitlessly. On account of their ambition and malice Jesus declared to them that they had already received their reward.

(*b.*) That our fast may please God, we must renounce sin. The proud man must humble himself and give to God the honor of any good that he may fancy he possesses, the avaricious man must lay aside his inordinate desire for the goods of this world, and not set his heart and affections upon them, but must give alms; the unchaste must renounce his sinful company and all carnal desires, and live chastely. We must all fast from sin. Some of you may be dispensed from the rigorous observance of Lent, but you can not be dispensed from the obligation of doing

penance and abstaining from sin. The Church expects this kind of fast from us all, for she thus prays: "Grant, O Lord, that thy people who chastise their flesh by abstinence from food, may by hunger and thirst after justice learn to fast from sin."

2. *Mortifying all inordinate inclinations.*

(*a.*) As long as we do not yield to evil inclinations, which are a consequence of original sin, they are not sinful, but if we permit ourselves to be governed by them, they become a fruitful source of sin. How grievously did the Scribes and Pharisees sin, because they did not bridle their ambition: Judas, because he did not put away his avarice; David, who did not banish his impure desires! If we neglect the mortification of our evil inclinations, all corporal fasting is without value. Hence St. Chrysostom says: "What does it profit to fast, if the irascible do not become meek, the envious peaceable; if the avaricious do not desist from their passion and give alms to the poor; if the voluptuous do not become chaste, and the ambitious give up vain honor?"

(*b.*) Examine then to-day the evil inclinations which draw you most forcibly to sin; and having found them out, use all diligence in rooting them up during Lent. This is the fast most pleasing to God. A certain hermit in Thebais had a disciple whom he daily instructed in the spiritual life. He gave him this instruction every evening, after which he dismissed him in order to go to rest. One day some people of the world came to the hermit and he discoursed with them on spiritual things until evening. When they had gone, he began to instruct his disciple as usual. Being very much fatigued, however, the old man was overpowered by sleep. The disciple waited till his spiritual father should awake and dismiss him. But as the old man slept till after midnight, the disciple was tempted to awake his master, or to leave quietly and go to rest. Seven times he suffered this temptation, but each time he resisted it. Finally, long after midnight, the old man awoke and dismissed his pupil. Afterwards, whilst praying, he had a vision in which he saw a splendid seat and on it seven crowns. On asking to whom these crowns belonged, an angel told him that they belonged to his disciple, who had merited them by a sevenfold self-denial. You can do nothing better and more meritorious during Lent than exercise yourselves in mortification. As often as you banish inordinate inclination or sinful desire, you gain a crown, which our Lord will give you on the day of judgment.

3. *Performing good works with zeal.*

(*a.*) Heaven is a reward, which is given only to those who have worked diligently in the vineyard of the Lord. "Every tree therefore that doth not yield good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire."—*Matt.* 3:10. Against that servant who buried his talent was the terrible judgment pronounced: "The unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness."—*Matt.* 25:30. The bridegroom said to the foolish virgins who had their lamps but no oil, that is, faith but no good works: "I know you not."

(*b.*) If therefore you have heretofore been negligent, redouble your zeal during this holy season in order to make up for the past. Pray and meditate, read spiritual books, listen to the word of God, receive the sacraments frequently, perform some of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, according to your means and opportunities, offer your labors to God, and bear patiently the hardships and tribulations of life. This zeal in good works will crown your corporal fast, and render you worthy of God's grace and love.

PERORATION.

You know now how you ought to sanctify the forty days' fast. Be not content merely with the corporal fast, but practice also the spiritual, by renouncing sin, by bridling your inordinate inclinations, and by performing good works. "Begin, then," as St. Leo says, "the holy days of Lent with devotion and render yourselves worthy of the mercy of God by works of mercy. Extinguish the fire of anger, blot out hatred, love concord and peace, and anticipate one another in works of humility. Masters, be just to your servants and subjects. Put a stop to the desire of revenge, forget injuries and offenses, let severity be changed into mildness, indignation into good-will, and strife into peace." If you unite your corporal with your spiritual fast and thus sanctify the holy season of Lent, you will have reason to hope that it will be to you a time of grace and salvation. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

THE MAID-SERVANT SWEEPING THE HOUSE WITH A BROOM, A PATTERN FOR PENITENTS.

When he is come, he findeth it (the house) swept and garnished.—Luke 11: 25.

With the first day of Lent begins the time during which we must all, receive the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist in accordance with the precept of the Church. She reminds us of this by the two gospels which are read on this and on next Sunday. The gospel for this day, speaking of the casting out of the devil, refers to the Sacrament of Penance; the gospel for next Sunday, the narrative of the wonderful multiplication of the loaves, refers to Holy Communion. May God grant that we mays all during Easter time receive these Sacraments worthily! Our Lord in the gospel speaks of a house that has been swept. You know what a servant does when she cleans the house, or sweeps it, as we commonly say. You must do the same when you make your Easter confession. I propose to you to-day the example of a servant sweeping the house, to show you how you must act in order to make a good Easter confession.

PART I.

1. Before the servant begins to sweep she looks for the dirt and dust which are to be removed with the broom. This preliminary inspection is necessary, for without it she would not know where the dirt is that is to be removed. What she does you must also do when you go to confession; you must begin the business with a diligent scrutiny of your interior, or in other words, with a careful examination of conscience. And why? Because without such an examination of conscience you will not be able to ascertain properly the state of your soul; and consequently you would be incapable of making an entire confession, and equally incapable of making a thorough and sincere amendment of your life; because you can not be sorry for sins which you do not know, neither can you confess them, nor, as regards such, make any particular resolutions of amendment. Hence you see the absolute necessity for this close examination of conscience to begin with.

2. Just as the servant moves aside tables, chairs, and other articles of furniture, in order to discover the dust and to get at it with the brcom, so must we act at our examination of conscience, removing everything that might stand in the way of our arriving at a full knowledge of our sins. Such obstacles are—

(*a.*) *Carelessness and negligence in the examination of conscience.* As the validity of confession, and consequently our eternal salvation, depends on a good examination of conscience, this is obviously a most important business, and one to which we must devote the necessary attention. Persons who lead careless lives and go seldom, perhaps only once a year or so, to confession, must naturally devote considerable time to this examination. If they get through the business carelessly and in a few minutes, they certainly expose themselves to the danger of overlooking sins which they should confess, and consequently of confessing invalidly.

(*b.*) *Self-love.* This must necessarily be removed, because it covers the filth of sins, or at least prevents them from being seen in their proper light. It suggests: This is no sin, you need not be disquieted about that, you need not confess this thing or that. And these suggestions may be in regard to matters that are grievously sinful and that must be confessed if our confession is not to be a sacrilegious one. Again, it is self-love that infuses false shame into the penitent, and makes him conceal a sin, or so palliate it as to make it appear altogether different from what it is in reality. I exhort you to examine your conscience in the light of faith sincerely and diligently.

PART II.

1. The servant, having inspected the places that are to be swept, does not begin at once to sweep, but first sprinkles some water. Why does she do this? Because it is necessary; if she did not do so, the dust would rise in clouds and settle everywhere, and the last state of the room would become worse than the first. Such a sprinkling is also necessary at confession, if we wish God to forgive us our sins. Thus David sprinkled, who said of himself: "Every night I will wash my bed; I will water my couch with my tears."—*Ps.* 6: 7. Mary Magdalen, who "began to wash his feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head."—*Luke* 7: 38. Peter, who after our having denied our Lord, "going out wept bitterly."—*Luke* 22: 62. We must bewail our sins, if not with external, at least with internal tears, that is, with true sorrow of the heart. Without contrition, no valid confession, and no forgiveness of sin, is possible. How

much do some deceive themselves who believe that their confessions are good, provided they have never knowingly concealed a sin! Though you confess your sins in the most minute manner, your confession is fruitless, if true contrition be wanting. Instead of obtaining forgiveness in the confessional, you only add a bad and sacrilegious confession to your other sins.

2. The servant is anxious to sprinkle *all the spots* where filth is; if she were to leave filthy spots unsprinkled, there would be a great deal of dust when sweeping, and this would settle everywhere. In like manner we must sprinkle the filthy spots of our hearts; that is, we must repent of all the sins which we have committed, at least of all mortal sins, for if we had not contrition for every mortal sin, our confession would be invalid. Why? (Explain.) Carefully see, then, that at every confession you are sorry at least for all mortal sins.

3. The servant uses *clean* water for sprinkling, for if she took dirty or foul water, she would only make the floor dirtier, and spread a bad odor. Our contrition must resemble pure water; we must be sorry for our sins, not from selfish and natural, but from pure and supernatural motives. If we repent of our sins only on account of some temporal loss, temporal shame or punishment, our contrition is of no value, and does not entitle us to forgiveness. We must be sorry for our sins on account of God, because we have offended him, lost his love and grace, and deserved punishment. Ask God earnestly at every confession to grant you the grace of a true, supernatural contrition, and for this end consider the baseness and the evil consequences of sin.

PART III.

Now, when sweeping, the servant takes a firm hold of the broom. You must do the same as often as you go to confession, but especially at your Easter confession; you must make—

A strong and firm purpose of amendment.

(*a.*) *A strong purpose*, which consists in your firmly resolving to avoid at least *all mortal sins, as also every proximate occasion of sin.* Where such a purpose is wanting there is no forgiveness of sin. Ah! how many confess without such a purpose! They confess merely to confess, but not to amend their lives. They are not resolved never again to offend God, at least by mortal sin; they have favorite sins, deeply rooted habitual sins which they never resolve to give up. How great is the number of those who even at Easter confess unworthily for this reason! You must also

be resolved to avoid the proximate occasion of sin. What does that mean? Enumeration of such occasions; familiarity with persons of the opposite sex, intimate friendship and company with irreligious, bad people, bad society and houses, sinful enjoyments, etc. That is difficult, you will say. I grant it; but it must be done, for Christ says: "If thy hand or thy foot scandalize thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee. It is better for thee to go into life maimed or lame than, having two hands and two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire."—*Matt.* 18: 8. Think of the fire of hell, which you can not escape, unless you give up the proximate occasiou of sin.

(*b.*) *A firm purpose.* Be resolved never again to offend God. For this end you ought daily to renew the resolution which you made at your confession, that it may remain firm and constant. Many neglect this, and as a consequence relapse soon after their confession into their former sins. Do not forget the promise and resolution made at your confession, but renew them daily, especially in every temptation, that your amendment may be lasting.

PART IV.

1. After those preliminaries, the servant begins the sweeping. She handles the broom dexterously, and there is no nook or corner into which it does not go in order to clear away the dirt.

Take the active servant for a pattern, and confess sincerely. Drag *all* your sins to the light, and in a spirit of humility and with contrition of heart accuse yourself of them in simple and clear language. This is absolutely necessary for the attainment of forgiveness and grace. St. Augustine says: "Let no one say, I confess to God alone in secret. It is enough that he who is to pardon me knows the sorrow of my heart." If it were so, Christ would not have said: "What you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven." For what purpose would he have committed the keys to the Church? Therefore it is not enough to confess to God; we must also confess to those who have received from him the power of binding and loosing.

2. The servant who allows dust to remain here and there, or who, instead of throwing it away, conceals it in a corner, or hides it somewhere, that it may not be noticed, is certainly not a good servant, nor would she deserve any praise from her mistress. In like manner, those penitents who, instead of cleansing their conscience by a sincere confession, conceal a sin out of fear or shame do their work ill. He who does this knows well that even if he leave the confessional absolved, he has confessed

sacrilegiously, and if he die in that state that he will be damned for ever. Oh, be candid and sincere in your confessions, never conceal a sin, be it ever so grievous and heinous. It is better for you not to confess at all, even on your death-bed, than knowingly and willingly to conceal anything that ought to be confessed. (Reasons why all should confess candidly.)

PART V.

1. The servant, after sweeping the house, takes a cloth and wipes the dust from the tables, chairs, and other articles of furniture, in order to clean everything as completely as possible. The same must be done in the cleansing of the heart. After we have confessed and have received the priest's absolution, the principal cleaning is done, the sins, together with their eternal punishment, are remitted, but *temporal* punishments remain, just as after sweeping the house some dust remains. We must remove these temporal punishments by the diligent performance of the penance enjoined on us by the confessor, just as the cleanly and careful servant wipes the dust from the furniture. Perform, then, diligently the penance enjoined after every confession. If a daily penance be enjoined, perform it every day at a certain time for fear of forgetting it, and renew every time you perform your penance the good resolutions you have formed to avoid carefully the sins confessed. In this way the penance becomes not only a means for the expiation of the temporal punishments due to sin, but also an excellent aid to a permanent amendment of life.

2. If the servant, in the cleansing of the house, notices a cobweb, she removes it, and if she catches the spider, she kills it, so that it can weave no more webs. Something of the same kind remains to be done after confession. You must avoid the *dangers and occasions of sin and employ the means for penance and amendment.* With this object follow the advice of the confessor, practice prayer and meditation on eternal truths, and receive the sacraments as often as possible.

PERORATION.

When you go to confession at Easter, or at any other time, think of what I have told you about the servant sweeping the house. What she does when sweeping, you must do when you go to confession. Examine your conscience carefully, make an act of perfect contrition for all your sins, together with a firm purpose never more to offend God, confess your sins candidly and sincerely, and after confession and absolution perform your

penance. By doing so, you will make a good confession, and with souls cleansed from sin and reconciled with God, the blessing, and care, and love of your heavenly Father will follow you in your daily duties, and fit you more and more every day to be received by him at last into the kingdom of his glory. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

6. MORAL SKETCH.

THE EVIL OF RELAPSE.

The last state of that man becomes worse than the first.—Luke 11: 26.

The fourth precept of the Church is: *To confess our sins at least once a year, and to receive* WORTHILY *the Blessed Eucharist at Easter or within the time appointed.* In our parish, thank God, there will be only very few, if any, who will not observe this precept of the Church. But how great will be the number of those whose hearts the unclean spirit, with seven other worse spirits, will again take possession of, so that their last state will become worse than the first? And with whom will this be the case? With those who after the reception of the sacraments do not persevere in virtue, but relapse into their former sins.

I intend to speak to-day about a very widely spread, and at the same time very fatal evil, viz., a *relapse*, and to show you—

I. Its cause,
II. Its consequences.

PART I.

I do not speak to-day of the relapse into lesser faults into venial sins, for even fervent Christians who are solicitous for their salvation, can not always, without a special grace, keep themselves entirely undefiled. If we do not commit these faults carelessly, but rather humble ourselves before God for them, and endeavor to amend them, they do us no particular injury. Neither do I speak of relapses into extraordinary and unusual sins, which happen very rarely, and then only on account of some unfortunate circumstance, for such relapses are generally foi-

lowed by a speedy and lasting amendment. I shall speak only of relapses into those mortal sins which, sad to say of a Catholic congregation, must be described as ordinary, and which are committed by many after their confession.

Let us see the principal causes of these relapses.

1. *One of the principal causes of relapse is that there was not real and sincere conversion at the time of confession.*

(*a.*) There are many who go to confession without being earnestly resolved to forsake their sinful life. Such penitents are often numerous at Easter time. They confess merely to comply with the letter of the law, so as not openly to fall under the excommunication of the Church; or because their parents or superiors wish them to do so, or because they can not easily evade the obligation without attracting attention. What is to be thought of such confessions? They are generally invalid and sacrilegious, and, of course, not followed by any amendment of life. For how can those sinners be expected to amend their lives, who at their confession are devoid even of the will to amend? No one need wonder that such persons after Easter sin as frequently and grievously—nay, perhaps more frequently and grievously than before. It is much to be feared that the Easter confessions will become for many the cause of their damnation.

(*b.*) Others are not exactly impenitent; they have a kind of sorrow for their sins, and make resolutions of amendment, but they lack the fervor of true repentance; they do not hate and detest their sins above all things; they can not resolve rather to lose house and home, life and liberty, than offend God by mortal sin. Very little reliance can be placed on such. Can you expect of them a lasting amendment? Certainly not. As soon as a violent temptation assails them, they waver, and relapse into the old sins.

Reflect, and see whether this want of real repentance was not the cause of your so soon falling back into sin. If you find it to be so, in God's name I exhort you to rise from your deplorable state, and prepare to make your Easter confession the great turning-point for the better in your spiritual life.

2. Another cause of relapse is *not avoiding the occasion of sin.*

(*a.*) Every one is by nature more inclined to evil than to good, and has some difficulty in controlling his passions and keeping his soul free from sin. Now, if we expose ourselves imprudently to the occasion of sin, the temptation becomes stronger, because

two enemies, an interior and exterior, assault the heart, and extraordinary grace will be required to preserve us from sin. And yet this extraordinary grace, though certainly necessary, can not be hoped for, because we expose ourselves to danger of sin presumptuously and without necessity. "He that loveth danger shall perish in it."—*Ecclus.* 3 : 27.

(*b.*) This is particularly true of the *proximate occasion;* if we do not avoid this when we can do so it is equivalent to being willing to sin again. Hence St. Augustine says. "To love the proximate occasion of sin, and to fall into sin, are one and the same thing." There are many penitents who are not willing to give up the proximate occasion of sin. To this class belong single persons keeping sinful company, drunkards, gamblers, spendthrifts; these after their confessions regularly relapse into their former sins, because they do not avoid the occassion. For this reason confessors are expressly forbidden to absolve penitents who are not willing to avoid the proximate occasion of sin; absolution is to be withheld till the occasion is avoided, because otherwise no amendment could be expected. Some penitents promise the confessor that they will avoid the proximate occasion of sin; but when they are persons who have made such a promise several times before and have never kept it, absolution must be deferred, notwithstanding their promise, till they have given proofs of their repentance by really avoiding the dangerous occasion.

It is therefore as unjust as it is foolish to inveigh against confessors and to complain when they do not absolve habitual sinners at once; they have their rules, which they can not violate without doing an injury to their own souls and to the souls of their penitents.

3. *A third cause of relapse is the neglect of the means of amendment.* I shall mention the principal means.

(*a.*) *Watchfulness,* according to the word of Christ: "Watch ye that ye enter not into temptation."—*Matt.* 26 : 41. We must watch over our thoughts, emotions, and inclinations, in order that, if they entice us to evil, we may be ready to combat and suppress them; we must watch over dangers coming from without, in order to perceive them in time and to guard ourselves against them. He that omits this watchfulness resembles a sleeping sentinel who is surprised by the enemy and killed. Many fall more into the snares of Satan because they do not watch, especially over their exterior senses and their surroundings.

(*b.*) *Prayer.* "Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Of ourselves we are much too weak to overcome the

enemies of our salvation; we need the grace of God for this. But the means of obtaining the grace of God, especially the grace to overcome all temptation, is prayer. For this reason every confessor exhorts to prayer. But many penitents do not comply with this admonition; they neglect prayer, or pray without any devotion, or they do not pray in the time of temptation; no wonder then that they relapse after confession.

(*c.*) *Walk in the presence of God.* If we wish to keep from sin, we must have God before our eyes. Example: Joseph of Egypt, who said: "How then can I do this wicked thing, and sin against my God."—*Gen.* 39: 9. Susanna, who, full of courage, said: "I am straitened on every side, for if I do this thing, it is death to me, and if I do it not, I shall not escape your hands. But it is better for me to fall into your hands without doing it than to sin in the sight of the Lord."—*Dan.* 13: 22, 23. But how many Catholics in the pressure of business and the tumult of the world forget God and the truths of our holy religion, and the consequence is that they become careless and live as if there were neither heaven nor hell.

(*d.*) *The frequent renewal of good resolutions.* In order not to become fatigued or worn out in arduous business, it is necessary to urge ourselves to it from time to time by strong resolutions. If we omit such resolutions there is reason to fear that we shall yield to the temptation of weariness, and shirk or give up the business. The same is true of the business of our salvation, which is a very laborious and wearisome one. We must make good resolutions daily, strong and particular resolutions too, especially morning and evening, and in every temptation, in order to persevere in virtue. A great many penitents do not do this. They soon forget the resolutions which they have made at their confessions; therefore they grow careless and relapse into their former sins.

(*e.*) Finally, *the frequent reception of the holy sacraments.* By frequent confession we learn to know the malice and wickedness of sin, conceive a more profound detestation of it, and receive particular grace to overcome temptations. St. Chrysostom calls holy communion that wonderful food which changes the most timid into a lion and makes the devil tremble; and the Council of Trent calls it an antidote which frees us from daily faults and preserves us from mortal sins.—*Sess.* 13; *Cap.* 2, *de Euch.* But many, especially habitual sinners, confess and communicate very seldom, perhaps once or twice a year, and this is the reason why they always relapse into their former sins.

PART II.

What are the consequences of relapse? I shall mention only three:

1. *The loss of the fear of God.* A certain man, seeing a lion for the first time, was seized with such violent terror that he trembled like a leaf. He was greatly frightened the second and the third time, but by-and-by his fear decreased, and finally he laughed at his former timidity. It is so with the relapsing sinner. After the first sin his conscience is aroused; the thought: "Thou hast grievously offended God, lost his grace and heaven, and if thou die in this state thou shalt be lost for ever," fills him with terror and robs him of all peace. But if he frequently relapse into the same sin, these salutary emotions become much weaker, and by-and-by he remains as tranquil after every relapse as if he had not the least cause to fear. Unfortunate man! he feels secure in sin, he laughs and is merry on the brink of the precipice. The words of the Holy Ghost apply to him: "The wicked man, when he is come into the depth of sin, contemneth." —*Prov.* 18: 3. Examples from life: the impure, drunkards, gamblers, cursers, blasphemers, who always relapse into their old sins without being in the least disturbed. Hence St. Augustine says: "Sins even great and horrible, as soon as they have become a habit, are looked upon as little or no sins at all, this is carried so far that it seems to some unnecessary to conceal them any more; they boast of them and make them notorious." Ah, how fearful is the state of the sinner who has lost all fear of God, all fear of the divine justice. That man can hardly be converted. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (*Prov.* 1. 7), and this fear the sinner has impiously and defiantly cast aside.

2. The second consequence that frequently follows relapse into sin is that the *relapse becomes the origin of a habit of sin.* What one frequently does becomes a habit. This is particularly true of sin, which soon becomes a habit, for man is naturally inclined to evil. The habit becomes so much the stronger the more frequently the relapse into sin occurs, and this habit finally becomes a second nature, as it were, so that a true and lasting conversion, if not absolutely impossible, is at least very improbable.

(*a.*) The *Sacred Scripture* teaches this: "A young man, according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it." —*Prov.* 22: 6. "If the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots, you also may do well, when you learned evil."

—*Jer.* 13: 23. "His bones shall be filled with the vices of his youth, and they shall sleep with him in the dust."—*Job* 20: 11.

(*b.*) The *holy Fathers* teach this. St. Jerome says: "The evil does not become so strong by nature that it seems to be changed into nature, but by the frequent habit and the love of sin." St. Chrysostom remarks: "Great is the tyranny of habit, yea, it is so great that it compels as much as nature." St. Bernard: "The frequent repetition of sin begets the habit; the habit, the necessity; the necessity, the impossibility; the impossibility, despair; and despair, damnation."

(*c.*) *Experience.* Many who are addicted to drunkenness, impurity, gambling, cursing, etc., frequently bewail their wretched condition, they sigh and moan, saying: "Oh, that I were once again free from this wretched habit!" They sometimes make an attempt to reform themselves, but in vain; the bad habit becomes daily stronger, and reduces them to the old slavery. A priest once tried to convert a voluptuous man and bring him back to a sense of duty. The sinner was moved to tears, which he freely shed, but while weeping and sobbing, he uttered these awful words: "If you were to open hell for me, if I were to see the devils ready to receive me, on the first occasion that might present itself I should be unable to abstain from my habitual sin, not even if I knew for certain that immediately after the commission of it I should die and that my soul should be plunged into hell." Oh, the terrible strength of a bad habit!

3. *Frequently final impenitence is the consequence.* Relapses repeated for a long series of years—nay, often the greater part of life, bring the sinner to such a pass that he gives up all hope of conversion and lives and dies in sin. This impenitence has its cause—

(*a.*) *In the blindness of the understanding.* Sin has this peculiarity, that the more frequently it is committed and the longer it lasts the more it blinds man. St. Eusebius says: "The more one sins, the less one knows one's sins." Witness, the Sodomites, who, in consequence of their prolonged wickedness, were so blinded that they believed themselves more just than Lot; therefore, they rejected his warning with angry words, saying: "Thou camest in as a stranger, was it to be a judge?"—*Gen.* 19: 9. St. Augustine, writing on this passage, says: "So far had it gone with the habit of this abominable vice that the Sodomites considered it a virtue, and he who tried to prevent it was rebuked more than he who committed it." It is so in our days with the voluptuous, the drunkards, cursers, blasphemers, gamblers and

others who sin almost continuously, or upon all occasions. You may admonish them with all kindness, or with earnestness and severity; you may hold up to them the joys of heaven and the torments of hell, all will be in vain, they are so blinded that of all you tell them they believe little or nothing.

(*b.*) In the *obduracy of the heart.* As a bodily sickness is aggravated by a relapse and finally becomes incurable, so the oft-repeated sin makes the ruin of the soul more complete and hopeless at every repetition. At last the man arrives at the point when virtue becomes not only indifferent, but even hateful to him, and he finds pleasure only in wickedness. An example of this hard-heartedness we have in the Scribes and Pharisees, who, in spite of all the doctrines and miracles of Jesus, continued in their unbelief. Great is the number of the impenitent. "Knowest thou not the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance. But according to thy hardness and impenitent heart thou treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the just judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his works."—*Rom.* 2: 4-6.

PERORATION.

How evil, how pernicious, are the results of a relapse! The relapsing sinner loses more and more the fear of God; he becomes an habitual sinner, and frequently falls into final impenitence. Beware, therefore, of relapsing into your former sins. At the coming Easter time make a good confession, promise God and your confessor, in all the sincerity of your heart, never again to commit a mortal sin. If you have a firm purpose, a lasting conversion is possible; employ the general and particular means of amendment, and God will assist you with his grace, so that you will no more relapse, but work out your salvation and be numbered among the elect. **Amen.**

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

7. MORAL SKETCH.

THE ADVERSARIES OF CHRIST.

He that is not with me, is against me.—Luke 11 : 23.

These are significant words of Christ, from which it necessarily follows that there are two classes of men; those who are for him, who belong to him, and serve him, and those who do not serve him, but serve their own passions, the world and the devil, and are consequently the adversaries of Christ. Such adversaries were the Scribes and Pharisees, who hated our divine Saviour, and, in order to lower him in the estimation of the people, ascribed his miracles to the devil. The adversaries of Christ are numberless in our days. Let us speak of them to-day by answering the question:

Who are the adversaries of Christ?

PART I.

The indifferent, that is, persons who are indifferent in matters of faith and morals; they pretend that it matters not what a man believes, whether he belongs to this or that Church; whether he is a heathen, a Jew, a Mohammedan, a Protestant, or a Catholic; provided that he leads an honest life, he will be saved.

This is indeed a very pleasant doctrine but it is not Christ's. Nor are they who hold it with Christ. It is as far as far can be from what the Saviour taught. If what we believe or what doctrines we hold were a matter of indifference, why did Christ, for three years, under so many tribulations and persecutions, preach his gospel, and in order to induce people to believe in him, perform so many miracles? Why did he commission his Apostles to preach his divine doctrine to all nations? To what purpose the Christian faith at all, if any would do, since the Jews, and even the Gentiles, already had a religion? Moreover, Christ always speaks of *one* Church only, which he would found upon Peter the rock; of *one* shepherd and *one* fold, therefore of *one* faith; he also declares in the plainest terms that "he that believeth, and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned."—*Mark* 16 : 16. And what is the language of the Apostles? They unanimously declare that we can be saved only

by belief in Jesus Christ and his doctrine. Paul and Silas, in answer to the prison-keeper at Philippi, who asked what he should do to be saved, said. "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."—*Acts* 16: 31. St. Peter says: "Neither is their salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved."—*Acts* 4: 12.

The indifferent, then, are open adversaries of Christ, because by their assertion that it does not matter what one believes they directly contradict his doctrine. Be not deluded by them when they tell you to believe what you please as long as you are honest; say: "God and his Apostles convict you of a lie; to them I shall cling, I shall believe what the holy Catholic Church proposes to be believed, and according to that faith I shall live, for only by doing so can I obtain my everlasting end."

PART II.

The self-constituted innovators or Church reformers. They consider the Church as an ancient institution which does not suit our times, and therefore needs to be reformed, or remodeled, according to the spirit of the times. Catholic worship especially, is to them in many respects a stumbling-block; they talk of simplifying it, of removing the unmeaning ceremonies, of the introduction of the vernacular into the divine offices. Fools, they know not that, as a Father of the Church remarks, the Church is heaven in miniature, that the gorgeous worship is on account of the majesty of God, whom man can never honor enough; they forget that every, even the least, ceremony has a spiritual meaning and is by no means mere gorgeousness for him who endeavors to comprehend ecclesiastical usages. These innovators do not consider that the Latin language adds to the solemnity of the worship and not only furthers the unity of the Catholic Church, but also gives a most beautiful evidence of her universality. Truly, there is nothing grander, more noble, and more worthy of God, than Catholic worship.

Consequently, all who wish to change her mode of worship, or, as they think, to simplify and to amend it, are against Christ, and are enemies of his holy Catholic Church; for she is also in this point guided by the Holy Ghost.

PART III.

The half-educated, or so-called enlightened persons. They draw their wisdom from newspapers or conversations which they hear at their clubs or in their intercourse with the world. They wish to prove that they know something, and gladly jump at an opportunity to show off. And because now-a-days it belongs, forsooth,

to the "high-toned" to disregard everything pertaining to religion, they like to express their opinion when there is a question of the Church, its doctrines, its institutions and particularly its priests. In the Church, of course, they find a great deal that is worthy of blame; her doctrines and principles are too severe, and no longer suitable to the times; the Papacy must cease, for it does not agree with the liberty and welfare of the people. Bishops and priests hold much too firmly to obsolete ordinances of the Church; they must accommodate themselves to the spirit of the times, if they wish to continue to exist. The precepts of the Church do not bind; it is particularly foolish to consider the precept of fasting, and the annual confession and communion, as obligatory!

These are enemies of Christ. Christ is the founder of the holy Catholic Church; he rules and governs her: he promised and sent her the Holy Ghost, the spirit of Truth, to teach her all truth and to remain with her till the end of the world. To criticise and blaspheme against the Church is to criticise and blaspheme against Christ. Moreover, Christ emphatically says: "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican."—*Matt.* 18: 17. He that rebels against the Church and despises her precepts and ordinances, is, in the eyes of Christ, as bad as a heathen and a public sinner. Consider this well, so that by the mere talk of these men who wish to be looked upon as enlightened you may not be shaken in your reverence for, and obedience to, the Church.

PART IV.

The rationalists. These either deny the necessity of divine revelation absolutely, or assert that we must believe only what we comprehend with our reason; or they place reason above revelation by receiving and believing the truths of religion revealed by God only in so far as they comprehend them by reason. The rationalists, therefore, set themselves above the Sacred Scriptures and Christian tradition; they receive neither as the word of God, or they interpret them according to their own fashion. Reason is to them everything; they recognize no other authority, much less anything superior to reason.

That the rationalists are the adversaries of Christ is evident. Christ refers all men, in matters of faith and morals, to the teaching of the Church, to which they must submit unconditionally. "Going therefore teach ye all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." —*Matt.* 28: 19, 20. How clear are these words! Again: "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth

me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me."—*Luke* 10: 16. He, therefore, who does not submit to the teaching of the Church, and does not believe and do what she prescribes does not hear Christ, but despises him. Is not such a one an adversary of Christ? Strictly speaking, the rationalists have no supernatural and Christian faith. To believe as a Christian is simply to receive as truth what Christ, through his Church, proposes to be believed, and *because he proposes it.* As the rationalists do not believe many things which the Church proposes to our faith, and as, whatever they believe, they do not believe because the Church proposes it to believed, their faith is not a supernatural or a Christian faith, but only a natural and human one, which has no value before God.

PART V.

The atheists, or unbelievers. In our times there are a great many people who are really very wicked because they do not believe in God. If you speak to them of God, the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth, the rewarder of the good and the punisher of the wicked, they laugh and say: "There is no God." And as they do not believe in God, they do not believe in the immortality of the soul, nor in reward and punishment, nor in heaven or hell. Man is to them a rational animal; he has no soul, that is, an immortal spirit, and all ends with death.

It is evident that the unbelievers are adversaries of Christ; in spiritual matters they stand lower than the ancient pagans; for they, despite their dreadful errors, believed in gods, in the immortality of the soul, and in a reward or punishment in the next world. But how can a man come to believe in nothing, and deny even the existence of God? Christ gives the answer, saying: "This is the judgment, because the light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, for their works were evil. For every one that doth evil, hateth the light and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reproved."—*John* 3: 19, 20. It is sin and vice that lead man to unbelief. The truths of faith, the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient, infinitely holy and just God, of judgment, of heaven and hell, render the life of the sinner bitter; in order to get rest and peace, he tries to persuade himself that there is no God, no eternity. And he frequently succeeds in shaking off the yoke of faith, or at least in giving himself the appearance of unbelief. No truly pious and virtuous man has ever become an unbeliever. Guard against sin and vice, and you need have no fear of becoming unbelievers.

PART VI.

The revolutionists, etc. These stand in the most intimate connection with unbelievers: they, too, wish not to hear of God, and religion is to them an abomination. They are libertines, full of vile passions. Puffed up with intolerable pride, and miserable slaves of sensuality, they hate all existing order, and wish to create a new order of things. They are faithful servants of the devil, whose children they are, and who inflames them daily with his hellish fury. They are well aware that the Catholic Church determinedly resists their machinations for the overthow of society, and therefore nothing is more odious to them than the Catholic Church. They work with all their might for her downfall. For this purpose they constantly use the public press. Their papers and magazines are used to foment dissatisfaction and to excite innocent people, especially the laboring class, to revolution. With fiendish hate, and the most impudent and cool effrontery, they assail every institution, every class of society. They drag all that is venerable and holy into the mire, blaspheme God, and labor to destroy the Church; they openly preach unbelief, praise murder and rapine as virtue, whilst they detract from the most noble deeds, and ridicule, calumniate, and insult all that are opposed to their wicked chemes.

PART VII.

A great part of Judaism. The Jews, from the beginning, were the most bitter enemies of Christianity. As history teaches us, they were always ready to injure the Catholic Church. In our days it is the Jews who edit the most bigoted papers, papers that continually attack and misrepresent our doctrines and ordinances, and disseminate the basest lies and calumnies against priests and religious, to deprive them of the respect paid to them, and the authority exercised by them, so that their influence for the welfare of the Church may be rendered nugatory. And as now-a-days they are active in all the relations of civil life, and possess great riches, they have powerful influence and are able to oppress the Church and injure her in many ways.

PERORATION.

I have named the principal adversaries of Christ in our days, and have briefly shown you what they are, and what they aim at. Be prudent and circumspect, and guard yourselves against

falling into their snares and rendering yourselves miserable for time and eternity. Stand firmly by your holy religion, and by the Church of God, whose children you have become in your infancy by a special grace of God, for where the Catholic Church is, there is Christ, and they that hold with the Church hold with Christ. If you hold with Christ and serve him faithfully, he will give you his love, protect you from the enemies of your salvation, and invite you to enter into the joys of eternal life. **Amen.**

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

EPISTLE. *Gal.* 4: 22-31. Brethren: It is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bond-woman, and the other by a free-woman: but he who was by the bond-woman was born according to the flesh: but he by the free-woman was by promise. Which things are said by an allegory: for these are the two testaments: the one from Mount Sina engendering unto bondage, which is Agar: for Sina is a mountain in Arabia, which hath affinity to that Jerusalem, which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But that Jerusalem which is above is free, which is our mother. For it is written: "Rejoice, thou barren, that bearest not: break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for many are the children of the desolate, more than of her that hath a husband"; now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born according to the flesh persecuted him that was after the spirit, so also it is now. But what saith the Scripture? "Cast out the bond-woman and her son: for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman." So then brethren, we are not the children of the bond-woman, but of the free: by the freedom wherewith Christ hath made us free.

1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

AGAR AND SARA, TYPES RESPECTIVELY OF THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

St. Paul had founded in Galatia, a province of Asia Minor, several Christian congregations, which on account of their zeal caused him many joys. After he had left, false teachers came and made a great disturbance among them. They wished to unite the Jewish with the Christian religion, and asserted that the Christians also were obliged to observe the Jewish laws and ceremonies, such as circumcision, sacrifices, fasts and feasts, the difference between clean and unclean food, if they wished to be saved. Now, to guard the Galatians against being led astray, and to keep them in the true faith, the apostle wrote them an epistle proving that the Old Law of the Jews had ceased and that the

new Law had taken its place, according to the precepts of which one must live in order to be saved.

The lesson for this Sunday is but a small portion of this epistle, in which St. Paul proposes the two wives of Abraham, Agar and Sara, as the types respectively of the Jewish and the Christian Church, and from what the Sacred Scripture says of these two women he proves that the Christians are free from slavish bondage of ceremonies.

Part I.

Abraham had two sons, the one by a bond-woman, and the other by a free-woman; but he who was of the bond-woman was born according to the flesh; but he of the free-woman was by promise.

Under the Old Law God had allowed men to have more than one wife. Thus Abraham, the progenitor of the people of Israel, had two wives, Agar and Sara. Agar bore him a son according to the course of nature, for she was young and could become a mother. But it was not so with Sara, who, as the Scripture says, was barren and far advanced in years, so that in the natural and ordinary course of nature it was impossible for her to bear a child. And yet she became a mother when she was ninety years of age, Abraham being then in his hundreth year. This was the result of a divine promise.—*Gen.* 17: 15-21. Sara conceived and brought forth a son in virtue of a miracle, and consequently her son Isaac was a child of grace.

Here Agar and Sara appear as the respective types of the Jewish and the Christian Church. Whoever could prove themselves descended from Abraham were Jews and belonged as a matter of course to the Jewish Church. The descendants of Abraham were, therefore, according to the course of nature, members of the Jewish Church, just as Ismael, *according to the course of nature, was the son of Agar*. Now, we are not in the Christian Church as the Jews were in the synagogue; we are not here by any right of descent or inheritance; we are not naturally, but by a special grace of God, members of the Church. Although a child have Christian parents, it is not on that account a member of the Church; it becomes such only by Baptism, which is a grace of God, not earned or merited. The Christian Church, then, is a picture of Sara, for as she became a mother and brought forth Isaac only through the intervention of God, so we owe it to grace that we are Christians and can call the Christian Church our mother. For this reason Christ says: "No man can come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him."—*John* 6:44.

And St. Paul writes. "Who (Christ) hath delivered us, and called us, by his holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us."—*II. Tim.* 1: 9. If therefore, you are asked, of what faith are you? you must answer: "By the grace of God I am a Catholic," for only to grace must we ascribe it that we are Christians and children of the Catholic Church. Whilst so many millions of men, Turks, heathens, Jews, heretics, and schismatics, are sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, and are in extreme danger of being lost, we walk in the light of faith and are members of the Catholic Church, that Church in which we possess abundant means and graces to work out our salvation and be saved. Is this not a grace for which we can never sufficiently thank God? Let us employ it for our salvation, considering that much will be asked of him to whom much has been given.

PART II.

Which things are said by an allegory: for these are the two testaments; the one from Mount Sina, engendering unto bondage, which is Agar; for Sina is a mountain in Arabia, which hath affinity to that Jerusalem, which now is and is in bondage with her children. But that Jerusalem, which is above, is free, which is our mother.

By these words the Apostle again points out that Agar and Sara, with their sons, are types respectively of the old and the New Law, or of the Jewish and the Christian Church. As we know, the Old Law was given on Mount Sina. This law is prefigured by Agar and her son Ismael. Agar, indeed, was Abraham's wife, but she was not a free-woman, but only a servant, a bond-woman. Being herself a servant, a bond-woman, any child born to her would he born into her condition, that of slavery, and consequently her son was from his birth a bond-man, a slave. Behold, this Agar with her son Ismael resembled the Old Law and the Jews for whom it was given. This law, in truth, was nothing but a law for slaves. Why? Because its provisions were such as the law makes for slaves. To keep them in subjection and obedience they are threatened with punishment, or coaxed with promises of temporal reward. The Old Law did this. It was given on Mount Sina amidst thunder and lightning and imposes severe penalties on its violators, and great temporal rewards on its observers. "If thou wilt not hear the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep and to do all his commandments . . . . all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee. Cursed shalt thou be in the city, cursed in the field, cursed shall be thy barn and cursed thy stores, cursed shall be the fruit of thy womb and the fruit of thy ground, the herds of thy oxen and the flocks of

thy sheep; cursed shalt thou be coming in, and cursed going out. The Lord shall send upon thee famine and hunger, and a rebuke upon all the works which thou shalt do, until he consume and destroy thee quickly.—*Deut.* 28: 15, 20. "Now if thou wilt hear the voice of the Lord thy God, to do and keep all his commandments . . . all these blessings shall come upon thee and overtake thee. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed in the field: blessed shall be the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the droves of thy herds, and the folds of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy barns, and blessed thy stores. Blessed shalt thou be coming in and going out."—*Deut.* 28: 1-6. Behold here the law for slaves indicated by Agar and Ismael.

But Sara, with her son Isaac, is a type of the Christian Law and of the Christian Church. She was a free-woman, a consort, and participated in all the rights of Abraham; her son Isaac, too, was a free-man and had a claim and title to all the rights and privileges of his mother. Thus the Christian Church, which by the prophets, and especially by St. John in the Apocalypse, is designated as the new heavenly Jerusalem, is *free*, for her law has neither threats, fear, nor terror, but love, for its basis. We Christians are no longer servants, but children of God, as St. John writes: "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called and should be the sons of God."—*I. John* 3: 1. If we adhere to God with filial love and do his will, we may with reason hope for the everlastings joys of heaven. How much better off, then, are we than were the Jews of the Old Testament! Whilst God treated them as servants and was obliged to treat them as such on account of their intractable disposition, he adopts us as his children; whilst the Jews approaching God veiled their faces out of terror and dared not pronounce his name, we draw near him with filial confidence, praying, "Abba, Father," Let us highly esteem our dignity, and let us not pollute it by the gratification of low passions; let us exhibit ourselves as good children of our heavenly Father and cheerfully do his holy will.

Part III.

It is written: Rejoice, thou barren, that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not, for many are the children of the desolate, more than of her that hath a husband.

Here again St. Paul draws a comparison between Agar and Sara, and between the Jewish and the Christian Church. Sara was barren and to all appearance fated to die childless. This was not the case with Agar, for she already had a son, and as

she was in her prime, it might be expected that she would have more children, and be blessed with a numerous posterity. But, behold! the contrary happened. Sara, the barren wife, by a divine promise, brought forth a son, Isaac, in her old age, when she was naturally past child-bearing, and had far more numerous descendants than Agar; for the people of Israel, who are descended from Abraham and Sara, were far more numerous and powerful than the people of Ismael, who had Ismael, the son of Agar, for their progenitor. It is the same with the Jewish and the Christian Church. The Jewish Church, foreshadowed by Agar, outstripped the Christian at the beginning in numbers and authority, for whilst the former counted her adherents by the million, the latter, on the feast of Pentecost, was so small that they had room in a single hall at Jerusalem, there being, all told, only about one hundred and twenty souls. As Sara could have little hope of a numerous posterity before the birth of Isaac, the Church apparently could have little hope before the day of Pentecost of one day counting her millions and being spread over the whole world. She seemed to be as barren as Sara was, since her doctrine stood in direct contradiction to the views and passions of men, and for her propagation no one seemed less fit than the Apostles, those poor, illiterate, and despised fishermen. But as God had promised Abraham that he would multiply his descendants as the stars of heaven and the sands on the sea-shore, so the Church also received the promise that she should be extended over the whole world and be propagated among all nations. And this promise was fulfilled. The Church, notwithstanding all obstacles and persecutions, grew daily, and at present counts about two hundred and fifty million members.

Thus St. Paul could with justice apply the words of the Prophet Isaias (54: 1-3) to the Catholic Church: "Give praise, thou barren, that bearest not, sing forth praise and make a joyful noise thou that didst not travail with child, for many are the children of the desolate, more than of her that hath a husband." We also have the great happiness to be her children, therefore the Apostle calls us *children of the promise.* We have good reason to rejoice that God has called us to this blessing of being children ot his holy Church; but let it be our care that this great grace be not bestowed on us in vain, that we prove ourselves by a saintly life true children of Holy Church.

PART IV.

But as then he that was born according to the flesh persecuted him that was after the spirit, so also it is now. But what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bond-woman and her son: for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman.

As Sacred History informs us, Ismael derided Isaac and injured him in many ways, for he hated him, seeing that he was preferred before him and inherited from his father, although he was not the first-born. Sara, noticing this, importuned Abraham to cast Ismael with his mother out of the house. Abraham hesitated to comply with Sara's wish, but God told him to do so, whereupon Abraham dismissed Agar with her son Ismael.—*Gen.* 21: 9-14.

In this occurence the Apostle again beholds a type of the Jewish and the Christian Church. As Ismael persecuted Isaac, derided and grudged him the blessing of primogeniture, so the Jews hated and persecuted the Christians as long as they had the power, as is evident from the Acts of the Apostles. Some of the Jews who had become believers in Christ were even hostile to the Christians converted from Gentilism, and despised them; for they imagined that to them alone, as the children of Abraham and the chosen people of God, the grace of Christianity was due, and that the Christians from Gentilism were bound to keep the Jewish law, otherwise they could not be true Christians and be saved. The lot of Ismael befell them; they were rejected for their obstinacy and spirit of persecution, according to the word of our Lord: "I say unto you, that many shall come from the East and the West, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into the exterior darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."—*Matt.* 8: 11, 12. While pagan nations entered the Church, the great majority of the Jews persevered in unbelief and impenitence, and therefore were deprived of the grace of Redemption, which was intended for them, the first of all nations.

In Ismael and Isaac we also see depicted the worldly-minded and the zealous adherents of Christ. The former mock, despise, and persecute the latter; according to them, there is no other happiness than that of the children of the world; it is the goods and pleasures of this earth they seek after. Those who mortify themselves despise earthly things, and aspire to what is above, are fools in their eyes. But how wretched should we be if we shared the opinion of these worldly people! Like the unbelieving and hard-hearted Jews, we should be rejected by our Lord. Do not lose sight of your eternal destiny. In our time the greater part of mankind live in forgetfulness of God, and give free scope to their passions. Adhere to Christ and his Church, that you may not be lost with the many who are called, but saved with the few who are chosen.

We all have in ourselves an Ismael and an Isaac, the flesh that fights against the spirit, the old and the new man, who are always at war with each other; let us do as Abraham did, let us

cast out Ismael, the old, carnal man, for flesh and blood can not inherit the kingdom of God.

PERORATION.

St. Paul concludes the epistle for this day with the words: *So then, brethren, we are not the children of the bond-woman but of the free, by the freedom wherewith Christ hath made us free.* That is, we are no longer subject to the old ceremonial law of the Jews; for Christ has abolished this law now and for ever and has made us free. But our liberty does not consist in living according to our lusts and passions, for he who permits himself to be governed by them is a wretched slave. Only then are we truly free when we mortify ourselves, carry our cross daily, and follow Christ, whom to serve is to reign. To obtain and preserve this Christian freedom must be our constant endeavor, that "we have our fruit unto sanctification, and the end everlasting life."—*Rom.* 6: 22. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

GOSPEL. *John* 6: 1-15. At that time: Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is that of Tiberias: and a great multitude followed him, because they saw the miracles which he did on them that were diseased. Jesus therefore went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. Now the pasch, the festival day of the Jews, was near at hand. When Jesus therefore had lifted up his eyes, and seen that a very great multitude cometh to him, he said to Philip: Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat? And this he said to try him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered: Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, saith to him: There is a boy that hath five barley loaves, and two fishes; but what are these among so many? Then Jesus said: Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place: The men therefore sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves: and when he had given thanks, he distributed to them that were set down. In like manner also of the fishes as much as they would. And when they were filled, he said to his disciples: Gather up the fragments that remain, lest they be lost.

They gathered up, therefore, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above to them that had eaten. Now those men, when they had seen what a miracle Jesus had done, said: This is of a truth the prophet that is to come into the world. Jesus therefore, when he knew that they would come to take him by force and make him king, fled again into the mountain himself alone.

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2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

THE MIRACULOUS MULTIPLICATION OF THE LOAVES AND FISHES.

The gospel for this day relates that Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee, and went up into a mountain, and that *there he sat with his disciples*. His apostles whom he had sent out two and two to prepare the people for his coming, had returned from their mission and had "related to him all things that they had done and taught." He wished to give them some rest and therefore retired with them into solitude. But the people, on account of the miracles he wrought, were very much attached to him, and followed him into the solitude and were gathered around him on the mountain. Here it was that our Lord, after having taught the assembled multitude till evening and healed the sick that were brought to him, wrought a great miracle by multiplying five loaves of bread and two fishes, so that more than five thousand men were filled; and after they had eaten there remained a great deal more than there had been at first.

Let us meditate on this miracle, and consider what occurred—

I. Before it took place;
II. During the time of the miracle;
III. After it had taken place.

PART I.

1. Jesus wished to reward the people, who, with very commendable zeal, had listened for days to his divine word, and he resolved to work a miracle. These people had continued with him the whole day, eagerly listening to the words of salvation from his mouth, without regard to the hunger which they must have felt. This action of Christ and of the people teaches us that we must always be more solicitous for our soul and our eternal salvation than for the body and our temporal wants. The soul is more valuable than the body, and eternal life is of more consequence than the temporal. But many scarcely seem to think so. With

what are they occupied when they awake in the morning? Is it with God and the salvation of their soul? No. They are occupied with earthly, and perhaps even sinful things. What do their thoughts and desires aim at during the day? Again only at earthly things; they do not care about heavenly things. And what do they do in the evening? They go to rest without prayer, or they pray with so many distractions and with so little devotion that they offend God rather than honor him. How do they conduct themselves on Sundays and holidays? They do not work, they wear better clothes, they go to church. But have they on such days any better spirit and disposition than on other days? No, their hearts are even on these sacred days engaged with purely temporal things; they pray little and ill, they hear the word of God either not at all or without good resolutions; the hour they spend at church appears to them longer than whole days spent at work. Is not this to invert the order and to act more foolishly than unwise children who exchange precious pearls for pieces of stained glass? Oh! act like Christians, act as if you possessed the sense of grown people; seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all things which are necessary for your temporal welfare shall be added unto you.

2. We see that in the gospel for this day Jesus turns to Philip with the question: *Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?* Behold, how lovingly he thinks of the temporal wants of the people; he will not dismiss them without having fed them. But why does he ask Philip this question? As the gospel says: *This he said to try him, for he himself knew what he would do.* He knew that Philip and the other Apostles were weak in their faith. In order to turn their attention to the miracle which he was going to work, and to bring them to the knowledge of the weakness of their faith, he tried them. Thus God frequently tries people, leaving them for some time in their distress, although he is ready to help them, in order to cleanse them from their imperfections and faults, or to give them an opportunity of practicing some virtue, such as humility, patience, or self-denial, or to increase their merits for heaven. When God visits you with such trials, imitate Abraham, Job, and other saints, and persevere in patience and confidence in God, for to them that love God, "all things work together unto good."—*Rom.* 8: 28.

3. Philip did not understand the drift of our Lord's words. For he said: *Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little.* If bread was to be bought to feed the multitude, two hundred pence, that is, about forty or fifty dollars of our money, would not have been sufficient. Fifty dollars' worth would have given only one

cent's worth of bread to each man, evidently not sufficient to appease his hunger. Many a head of a family is sometimes as sorely perplexed as Philip; he actually needs for the support of his wife and children and other necessary expenses fifty or a hundred dollars, and he has not so many cents. What is he to do in this strait? Trust in God, persevere in patience, and do what he can do meet the difficulty; then everything will come right. It would be a mistake, and a great mistake for such needy fathers of families to become angry and indignant, break out into curses and blasphemies, and let all go to rack and ruin, saying, It is no use to try; neither would it be right to have recourse to illicit means, as cheating or theft, in order to alleviate the distress.

4. Andrew, the brother of Peter, was of Philip's opinion: *There is a boy here that hath five barley loaves and two fishes, but what are these among so many!* As men judge, Andrew was right; five loaves of bread and two fishes were not sufficient to feed five thousand men. But both Apostles erred in deciding according to their reason alone, and forming a judgment according to what they saw before them. They should have reflected: "Jesus is the Son of God, nothing is impossible to him; he has wrought many miracles before for the good of men; it is easy for him by a miracle to procure bread for these hungry people." So you must think when you are in a situation in which you can find no advice or relief. God need not work a manifest miracle to help you; he has a hundred other ways and means by which he can make it all come right again.

Part II.

Let us now consider the great miracle which Christ wrought. He ordered his Apostles to tell the people to sit down. This could be done easily and comfortably, as there was much grass in the place. "And they sat down in ranks by hundreds and by fifties."—*Mark* 6: 40. So there was no difficulty in seeing all that were there and in counting them. The number of men who sat down was five thousand, the number of women and children, who had separate places, may have been about two thousand. There they were sitting, the seven thousand, in rows, by hundreds and by fifties. All were hungry, for the sun was near its setting, and they were still fasting. But wherewith should they be fed, when all food was wanting? Could they not say with the Israelites: "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" Yes, Jesus, the Son of God, could and would furnish a table. He took the five loaves, lifted up his eyes, and when he had given thanks, he distributed, through his Apostles, to them that had sat down. In

like manner also of the fishes as much as they would. And all took and ate and were filled. And after that they gathered up the fragments of the five barley loaves which remained over and above to them that had eaten, and with they filled twelve baskets.

This, in brief, is the history of the miraculous multiplying of the loaves and the feeding of the people. Let us now, for our instruction, make a few practical reflections thereon.

1. Jesus feeds five thousand men with five loaves of bread and two fishes; this is a great miracle. But is not this miracle, and a greater one still, repeated every day? Who is it that feeds every day the hundreds of millions of men who live upon earth, together with the other beings whose number no system of computation can enumerate? Who is it that makes sixty, eighty, or a hundred grains proceed from one, and who fills our barns every year with grain? It is Jesus, the one God with the Father and the Holy Ghost, through whom, as St. John says, all was made that is made, who daily opens his hands and fills all with blessing. It is our duty to show him the same gratitude, the same love, and the same devotedness that these people did who were fed by Christ.

2. Our Lord blessed the bread, and thereby rendered it enough to allay the hunger of many thousand people. Everything depends on the blessing of God. What is the use of our labor and toil without the blessing of God? What does it profit to plough, to harrow, to fertilize, and to sow, if God does not send favorable weather and keep everything injurious from our fields? "Neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase."—*I. Cor.* 3: 7. Consider this truth and be not proud of your prosperity and the success of your business, but give the honor to God alone.

3. Jesus shows us how we can obtain God's blessing. Holding the loaves and fishes in his holy hands, he looked up to heaven (*Mark* 6: 41). By this he teaches us that prayer is the most effectual means of drawing down the blessings of God upon our works and undertakings. It is only too certain that many do not make any advance or progress in spite of all their efforts because they neglect prayer. They neither say their morning and evening prayers nor grace before and after their meals; they do not think of God during the whole day, and are loth to give any time to prayer, even on Sundays and holidays; therefore God withdraws his grace from them. Renew to-day the resolution to pray with fervor and devotion; and you, Catholic parents, see that your children say their morning and evening prayers.

4. Our divine Saviour gave to the multitude, in which were not only common people, but also people from the higher walks of society, a very common food, barley-bread and fish. This may be a lesson to us to be satisfied with common food suitable to our state of life, and not to desire costly and dainty dishes. Christ himself lived in poverty; he told his disciples to eat and drink what might be set before them, good or bad, just as it might happen; and the greatest saints frequently contented themselves with a fare that would have been thought too bad for the poorest people. This much is certain that people who do not restrain the craving of the appetite will never arrive at perfection.

5. The Apostles gathered more food than there was at first, for of the fragments twelve baskets were filled. From this you may learn that alms-giving does not make you poor. "He that hath mercy on the poor lendeth to the Lord; and he will repay him." —*Prov.* 19: 17. He that lends money or interest receives the capital with the interest, therefore more than he lent. The same is true of what we give to the poor; we receive it back with interest. God blesses the charitable even in this world, and gives them success in all their undertakings. Everything prospers with them, and even their children and children's children enjoy the divine blessing. But alms-giving is far more profitable for the other world, for it is rewarded with eternal life. What an encouragement this should be to us for giving alms, according to the admonition of Tobias (4: 8, 9): "According to thy ability, be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little."

PART III.

Let us now meditate a few moments on what occurred after the miracle—

1. *Now those men, when they had seen what a miracle Jesus had done, said: This is of a truth the prophet that is to come into the world.* They do not call Christ *a* prophet, such as Elias, Eliseus, Isaias, but *the* prophet, therefore a specified prophet, that is, that prophet to whom Moses referred in these words. "The Lord thy God will raise up to thee a *PROPHET* of thy nation and of thy brethren like unto me; him thou shalt hear."—*Deut.* 18: 15. This prophet is no other than Jesus Christ, the God-Man and Redeemer of the world. The people by designating him *the* prophet expressed their belief that he is the Son of God, the promised Messias.

How much do those people put to shame so many men of our time! One miracle which they saw is enough for them to become

believers, and yet all the miracles which the gospel relates of Christ, and which, in his name, from the time of the Apostles until now, have been wrought in the Catholic Church, can not bring these modern unbelievers to fall down before Jesus, and confess with Peter: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." They also deny modern miracles and those which are performed, as it were, before their eyes; for example, those at Lourdes in France, which are attested by thousands of witnesses and the most learned men. They *will* not believe, therefore they do not believe. They also permit themselves to be ruled by their base passions, especially pride, and this is the principal reason why they do not arrive at the faith, in fact, apostatize from the faith. Serve God and walk constantly in the way of his commandments, and you will never be in danger of losing your holy faith.

2. The people were not satisfied with acknowledging Jesus as the Messias: with a believing heart, they were about *to take him by force and make him king.* They wished to make him their prince, guide and protector. Here they showed their gratitude towards our divine Saviour. And in the same manner we must manifest our gratitude towards Jesus for the many benefits and graces which we have received; we must adore him with the most profound veneration as our Lord and God, and adhere to and serve him faithfully. But there are many among us who do the very opposite. How many refuse the adoration due to him; even in the church, where he is really present, they offend him by their unbecoming conduct! How many abuse the benefits of God, such as health, beauty, temporal goods, for the gratification of their sinful lusts! How many reject the proffered graces, or make use of them only to offend him the more grievously! Oh, consider that the abuse of the graces and gifts of God is the greatest ingratitude, and that a most rigorous judgment awaits all those who make themselves guilty of this crime.

3. Jesus knew that they wished to proclaim him king. What does he do? Does he permit it? No, he flees into the mountain himself alone. He teaches by his example that we also must shun the honors of the world. When the people will make him king, he flees; but when he was about to be humiliated most profoundly, and to be crucified as the greatest malefactor, he offers himself voluntarily, for it is his greatest desire to be humiliated and humbled. Do we not do the very reverse? Honor, reputation, authority, the praise and the applause of the world, are to us the most desirable of goods, and we seek them; contumely and humiliation appear to us as great evils, and we fly from them as much as we can. And we profess to be disciples and followers of Jesus! Ah, that we might hear him when he ex-

claims to us: "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart."—*Matt.* 11: 29. If we do not seek humiliation and contumely, let us bear them at least with tranquility and patience as often as they come upon us; let us never seek honor in the eyes of the world, so that we may not deprive ourselves of honor before God and of merit for heaven.

PERORATION.

Keep in mind the lessons you have heard to-day and follow them. You are more fortunate than the people mentioned in the gospel of this day, for you need not make a long and laborious journey to find Jesus. You have him near you, and can come to him at all times, for he is here in the tabernacle truly present under the species of bread. Oh, that it were your greatest joy frequently to visit and adore him! Jesus at this Easter time will give you an infinitely more precious food than he gave the people in the desert: he will nourish you with his most sacred flesh and blood in holy communion. Oh, employ this holy season of Lent in preparing for a worthy reception of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, that it may bring you grace and life everlasting. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

THE FIRM PURPOSE OF AMENDMENT.

And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to them that were set down.—*John* 6: 11.

At Easter every Catholic is obliged by a precept of the Church to receive the Blessed Eucharist. The gospel for this day, which speaks of the miraculous feeding of several thousand men, reminds us of this duty. In a far more miraculous manner does Jesus feed us, for he does not give us natural bread, but, as our infallible faith teaches us, his most sacred flesh and blood; he nourishes not only our body for the preservation of its natural life, but also our soul for the preservation of its supernatural life; he feeds, not a few thousands, but many millions—all who come to

this table. But, that we may receive this bread of Angels for our salvation, we must have a clean heart, since he who goes unworthily to communion, is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; for "he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself," that is, damnation. To prevent such an evil, the Church requires that we should go to confession before communion, cleanse our soul from every sin, and put ourselves in the state of grace.

I have spoken of the first two requisites for a good confession, and I come to-day to the third, *i. e.*, the firm purpose of amendment, which consists in the earnest will to amend our lives and to offend God no more. In order to give the necessary instruction on the firm purpose of amendment which is an essential part of contrition, I shall answer the following two questions:

I. What must be the qualities of our resolutions of amendment?
II. What must he who forms a firm and sincere resolution of amendment determine to do?

PART I.

Our resolution of amendment must be like our contrition—

1. *Interior, or sincere;*
2. *Universal; and*
3. *Supernatural.*

(*a.*) *Interior, or sincere: i. e., we must have, not a weak, but a strong, will to offend God no more.* Many sinners are convinced of the necessity of their conversion; they desire to break the chains of sin, but their desire is not strong; they do not desire their amendment with determination and perseverance. Soon after confession they return to their former careless life; they forget what they resolved and promised, and relapse into their old sins. Such Catholics lack a sincere purpose of amendment, for if they had it, they would offer greater resistance to temptations, and would not allow themselves to fall so soon again. They have reason to fear their confessions have been invalid and sacrilegious for the want of a firm purpose of amendment.

(*b.*) *We must have a firm will to renounce sin now, and not after a while.* There are many sinners who will change their life, they say, not now, but after a while. Many a young man thinks: When I grow older, when I get married, I will give up my sinful life. Many business men think: When I have set my temporal affairs in order, I will attend to the business of my salvation. In such a disposition of mind they go to confession for years; every

time they entertain the thought, though they may not express it: After a while, I will amend my life, not now. What else is this but to tell God, as it were, to his face: I will offend thee now, but after a while I will no more offend thee. And ought God to forgive a man who speaks thus? Consider that hell is full of those who wished to be converted but never were.

(*c.*) *We must have a firm will to suffer all evils rather than again offend God by a mortal sin.* Mortal sin is the greatest evil, for it deprives us of sanctifying grace, presents us from pleasing God, shuts heaven against us, and opens hell at our feet. There is no evil in the world that can be compared with it. From this it follows that we must detest and shun sin more than all temporal evils, nay, more than death itself. Therefore, a man who is not determined to avoid mortal sin under all circumstances is destitute of the sincere purpose of amendment, and can not hope for God's forgiveness. For this reason also the confessions of many penitents are invalid. They wish to amend their life, but will not, if it involve a sacrifice. If the confessor requires them to give up a sinful familiarity, avoid a certain house or a certain companion, forgive their enemies, restore ill-gotten goods, retract calumny, they are discouraged, and assert that they can not resolve to comply with these conditions. This is a manifest sign that they have not an earnest purpose of amendment, for if they had, they would resolve to renounce sin at any cost.

2. *Universal.*

(*a.*) We must be determined to avoid, at least, *all mortal sins.* Every mortal sin kills the soul by depriving it of its true life, which is sanctifying grace and the love of God, and makes us guilty of eternal damnation; therefore, if we wish to recover the love and grace of God, and escape eternal damnation, we must be determined to avoid all mortal sins. He who will not do this can not have a universal purpose of amendment, and, consequently, can not make a good confession. Ask yourselves, then, at every confession: Is there no sin to which my heart is attached? Do I hate and detest every sin? Can I say with truth that I will commit no mortal sin any more? Pay particular attention to your favorite and habitual sins, and promise God sincerely not to commit them any more.

(*b.*) Concerning venial sins, it is not absolutely necessary that the purpose extend itself to all without exception, as St. Thomas of Aquin says: "It suffices if one resolves to avoid some of them, or to diminish their number." All theologians agree with him. It is, however, good and salutary to repent of them all and make the

resolution, with the help of God's grace, to avoid them to the best of our ability. At every confession we should have the purpose not to offend God by a venial sin knowingly and with premeditation. If we have only venial sins to confess, the purpose must extend itself at least to one of the venial sins, because the purpose of amendment, like contrition, is absolutely necessary for the validity of every confession.

3. *Supernatural.*

(*a.*) We must be determined to sin no more, because faith teaches us that by every sin we offend God, lose his grace, shut heaven, and open hell. If any one resolves only from a natural motive to sin no more, *i. e.*, on account of some temporal loss, shame, or punishment, his purpose is only natural, and a natural purpose no more suffices for the forgiveness of sin than a natural contrition. By sin God is offended; for his sake we must be sorry for the sin and resolve not to commit it any more. For the want of a supernatural purpose of amendment many confessions are invalid. Example: Females who in consequence of their dissipation have brought shame and misery on themselves; habitual drunkards who in consequence of repeated drunkenness have contracted serious sickness; gamblers who by their passion for gambling have lost their money and property. The most sincere purpose of amendment, the determination to form avoid this or that sin, avails nothing if it be only natural.

(*b.*) Like the supernatural contrition, the firm supernatural purpose is either *perfect* or *imperfect.* If the love of God is so perfect and effectual in us that is alone produces the firm purpose to avoid sin, our purpose it perfect; but if the love of God in us is as yet weak and imperfect, and on that account the fear of hell or the loss of heaven, or the malice and turpitude of sin, impels us to resolve earnestly to offend God no more, our purpose is imperfect. The perfect purpose of amendment evidently is better than the imperfect; in connection with confession, however, the imperfect purpose is sufficient to obtain the forgiveness of sin.

PART II.

He who forms a firm and sincere resolution of amendment must be determined—

1. *To avoid, at least, all grievous sins, so that he would suffer anything rather than commit even one; to shun the danger, and especially the proximate occasion of sin.*

We must be determined to avoid, at least, all mortal sins. Of this I have already spoken. This, however, is not sufficient; we must also shun the danger of sin, and especially the proximate occasion thereof. By proximate occasion we understand such an occasion as exercises so great an influence over persons that they generally sin. Such proximate occasions of sin are: Living together with a person with whom one has already frequently sinned carnally; keeping company with a person, as it it is called, reading obscene books. Sometimes that which is a proximate occasion for one is not so for another. Thus, the visiting of saloons is a proximate occasion for him who gets drunk, whilst it is not for others, who do not become intoxicated. For a good purpose of amendment it is necessary to avoid the proximate occasion of sin. He who is determined to sin no more must also be determined to avoid that which might entice him to sin again. As it is impossible to carry fire in the bosom and not be burned, to touch pitch and not be defiled, so it is impossible to expose one's self to the proximate occasion of sin, and not sin. It is a great delusion to say: I will never sin by impurity again, but I will not give up the society of that person; I will never curse and swear while gambling, but I can not give up gambling: I will never get drunk again, but I can not give up visiting saloons. They may be in earnest with their protestations, but will they keep their promises? No, for the Holy Ghost assures us: "He that loveth danger, shall perish in it."—*Ecclus.* 3: 27. A spiritual writer (Drexelius) says: "In vain you drive the flies from sweetmeats, as long as you leave them uncovered on the table; you have scarcely chased them off when they come again." You must remove the allurements to sin—*the dangerous occasions*—otherwise sin will soon return, and captivate and control you more than before. Examples: Dina, Jacob's daughter (*Gen.* 34: 1, etc.); David (*II. Kings* 11); Solomon (*III. Kings* 11); Peter.

2. *To avoid excuses. I have frequently had such occasions, but I am not aware of having sinned.* It may be that you have not sinned in deed, but have you remained clean of heart? And though you may not have sinned, who assures you that in the future you will not do so? Do you know the proverb: "The pitcher often goes to the well, but at last comes home broken"? As often as you expose yourselves frivolously to the proximate occasion of sin, you tempt God, and will God protect you? *I can not avoid this occasion;* for example, I can not give up the society of this person, because it would reduce me to poverty; I can not remove this person out of my house because my business would suffer loss; I can not stay away from this society, because my honor, my position, would be injured. I recommend all such to consider the words of Christ: "If thy eye scandalize thee, pluck

it out, and cast it from thee; it is better for thee having one eye to enter into life, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire."—*Matt.* 18: 9. He, therefore, who does not shun the proximate occasion of sin, which he can shun, although with great difficulty, is not earnestly determined to avoid sin itself, and no priest can validly absolve him.

3. *To use the necessary means of amendment.*

(*a.*) These means are *general* and *particular.* To the general means belong watchfulness, prayer, the hearing of the word of God, spiritual reading, the frequent reception of the sacraments, the bridling of the senses, the mortification of bad inclinations, especially self-love. All sinners, whatever sins they may have committed, must employ these means, in order to preserve themselves from a relapse, and to make progress in virtue. The particular means are those which, according to the quality of sin and the particular circumstances of the sinner, are required for a thorough and permanent amendment. The confessor usually prescribes these particular means.

(*b.*) Every penitent must conscientiously avail himself of these general and particular means of amendment. He who will not do this, is destitute of a good resolution, for he who wills the end, must also will the means. Though sensuality object to these means, we must not neglect them. If a sick man observes the strictest diet, takes bitter medicine, and permits cauterizing and other surgical operations, to escape death and to recover his health, why should not we use the means indicated, hard though they be, if they are necessary for our amendment and for the salvation of our souls?

4. *To make due satisfaction for his sins, and to repair whatever injury he may have done to his neighbor.*

(*a.*) By every sin we commit we do an injury to God, because we rob him of what we owe him, honor, love, and obedience. Sin makes us debtors to God, and it is our duty to make satisfaction as far as we can. This satisfaction, as I shall afterwards explain at greater length, may be made by all good works, especially by works of mercy and mortification. He who is animated by a true spirit of repentance, endeavors, as far as it in his power, to make satisfaction to God for the injury done him.

(*b.*) There are sins by which not only is God offended, but our neighbor is also injured in regard to his temporal or spiritual

welfare. To this class belong scandal, seduction, murder, calumny, slander, detraction, theft, cheating, and any injury to our neighbor's property. If a person has committed such as sin, he is strictly bound to repair the injury done to his neighbor. If he has calumniated or slandered him, he is bound publicly to retract the slander or calumny; if he has appropriated to himself unjust goods, he must make restitution; if he has unjustly injured his neighbor in body, life, or property, he must repair the damage; if he has led others into sin, he must endeavor to bring them back to the path of virtue. If he does not determine to do this, the best resolutions would profit him nothing; nay, it would profit him nothing if he should even carry out his resolutions to avoid sin. God will not and can not forgive him because he refuses to repair the injury he has done.

PERORATION.

Remember what I have told you about the resolution of amendment, and examine yourselves at every confession as to whether your resolution is such as to entitle you to the forgiveness of your sins. Be determined to avoid not only sin, but also the proximate occasion thereof, to employ the means of amendment, to make satisfaction and to repair the injury. If the carrying out of this resolution appear arduous, say: "It must be done; I must either carry out the resolution and do penance, or I must remain in sin and in disgrace with God, and so perish eternally." You have your choice between the two. Be prudent, and choose that which will be for your salvation. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

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4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

THE LENTEN MASSES.

And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to them that were set down.—*John* 6: 11.

The fourth Sunday of Lent is called *Lætare* (rejoice) from the first word of the Introit of the Mass—*Lætare Jerusalem*, etc.: Rejoice, O Jerusalem, etc. Lent being half over, the Church gives

us a little reward for the hardships endured so far, and calls upon us to rejoice and be glad in view of the graces which the holy exercises of Lent procure for us. By the gospel which records the miraculous multiplication of the loaves she reminds us of the miraculous bread which we receive at Easter time, and of our duty to prepare properly for its reception by penitential exercises. We are, moreover, reminded of this duty by the masses which the Church has ordained for Lent. Let us meditate to-day on these Lenten masses, by answering the following two questions:

I. Why has the Church ordained a proper mass for every day in Lent?
II. In what do these Lenten masses differ from others?

PART I.

The Missal contains a proper mass for every day in Lent, whilst at other seasons proper masses are assigned, with some exceptions, only to Sundays and holidays. By this ordinance the Church gives us to understand that we should look upon the days of Lent as Sundays and holidays, and spend them accordingly. On Sundays and holidays we *must pray, hear the word of God, and meditate upon it.* With these two exercises we must occupy ourselves during Lent.

1. The fact of the Church having a proper mass for every day in Lent, should be an admonition to you to *devote yourselves diligently to prayer and devoutly to hear holy mass as often as possible.* The Christians of the first centuries give you a beautiful example. They assembled early in the morning, and not only heard mass, but remained after the holy sacrifice for some time in the church praying. Having finished their day's work, they again repaired to the church and persevered there in prayer and meditation till the priest gave them his blessing and dismissed them. With the same fervor they performed their domestic devotions. Thus every day in Lent was to them, as it were, a holiday, which they employed for the honor of God and the salvation of their soul.

In like manner we must celebrate the forty days' fast. Nothing is more necessary to us for our repentance and a pious life than exercises of devotion and prayer. All true penitents frequently practiced prayer.—David (*II. Kings* 12: 13,16); the good thief on the cross (*Luke* 23: 42); St. Paul (*Acts* 9: 9-11). I am sure you do not know any Christian who was converted without prayer, or who did not pray after his conversion. Pray diligently during Lent, the time of penance. Hear holy mass daily, if poss-

ible; remain somewhat longer in church on Sundays and holidays than at other times to adore Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist and to perform other devotions. Say the *Rosary* at least once a week, if you can not do so every day, selecting the sorowful mysteries; also the *holy Way of the Cross* at least on Sundays, as this devotion is particularly adapted for Lent, during which the bitter passion and death of Jesus Christ should be specially remembered.

2. To prayer you must join *the hearing of the word of God and meditation thereon.* You will find in your prayer-books a proper epistle and gospel for every day in Lent. The priest always reads this proper gospel at the end of mass, if the mass be not of the day, but of a saint. Why has the Church ordained proper epistles and gospels for every day of Lent? To induce us during this holy time to hear and meditate on the word of God. The word of God is a powerful means for repentance, piety and virtue, to which we should aspire, especially during Lent. St. Jerome says: "The preaching of the word of God is a plough which loosens the soil, eradicates the roots of vices, and softens the hardness of hearts." Examples of the efficacy of the word of God are the Ninevites, who at the preaching of Jonas did penance in sackcloth and ashes; the Jews, many of whom were converted by St. John, the preacher of penance; the inhabitants of Jerusalem, of whom three thousand were baptized at the first sermon of St. Peter. And not only the spoken word, but also the word of God read and meditated upon, frequently exercises a wonderful power over the human heart. Examples: St. Augustine, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Teresa, who, by reading and meditating on the word of God, were so moved that they renounced the world and dedicated their whole life to God. Frequent diligently, during Lent, the sermons and instructions, which are given more frequently during this season than at other times.

Part II.

The Lenten masses differ from others, though not essentially.

1. They are said in vestments of a violet color. The forty days' fast is a time of penance; hence the violet color, for every dark color, black as well as violet, indicates mourning, penitential mourning, for our sins. Therefore we read in Church history that the penitents in former times wore black, or at least dark garments, by which they gave expression to their sorrow for the sins they had committed.

The altars during Lent are also draped in violet. These frontals represent to us the sad truth that sin raised a partition between us and God, who is represented by the altar, and that we can not come to him so long as sin is not expiated by true repentance. They are removed on Easter Sunday, because Jesus has finished the work of our Redemption, blotted out sin and reopened the gates of heaven, and the Church supposes that by true repentance during Lent we have made ourselves worthy of the grace of Redemption. The violet vestments and curtains should therefore be to us an admonition to penance.

2. The Lenten masses have no *Gloria*, for this is a joyful chant, which does not suit a time of penance. Hence the Church has prohibited the solemnizing of marriages, and all public amusements whatever. How could we give ourselves to such worldly enjoyments, when Lent reminds us of sin and the evil connected with it on the one hand, and of the bitter passion and death of Christ on the other? Truly those who at this time live frivolously and run after the pleasures of the world, prove only too plainly that they have lost all Christian feeling, that they do not regard the evil and wretchedness which sin has caused us, and that they are entirely indifferent to the boundless love which caused Jesus to suffer death for us. His words aptly applies to such Christians: "Woe to you that now laugh, for you shall mourn and weep."—*Luke* 6: 25.

3. In Lent we have *a proper Preface*, in which is said: "By bodily fasting thou dost repress vice, elevate the mind, bestow virtue and rewards." Fasting, in truth, procures these great advantages. *It subdues vices* by weakening the desires of the flesh, and by strengthening the spirit, so that it can the better maintain its dominion over the body and its desires. *It elevates the mind*, for it frees the soul from the burthen and fetters of the body so that without hindrance it can raise itself to God. *It bestows virtue* by weakening sensuality and strengthening the spirit, it fits us for the practice of Christian virtues and for a pious life; and lastly, *it bestows rewards*, for it is one of the three good works particularly recommended in Scripture, which are rewarded with many graces here and with eternal life hereafter. Who, with these good works in view, will not cheerfully keep the precept of the Church?

4. In the Lenten masses the priest says before the prayer after communion: *Humiliate capita vestra Deo, Bow down your heads before God.* By these words we are admonished to humble ourselves most profoundly before God. When we sinned we exalted ourselves, and said in deed if not in word: "I will not serve." If

we wish to reconcile ourselves with God, we must, like the prodigal son, humble ourselves before him.

5. At the conclusion of the mass, the priest says: *Benedicamus Domino*, "Let us bless the Lord." As mentioned before, the faithful in former times, during Lent, and on other penitential days, did not leave the church immediately after mass, but remained for some time in order to participate in the prayers which were said by the clergy after mass. The priest therefore did not say: *Ite missa est*, "Go the mass is ended," but *Benedicamus Domino*, "Let us bless the Lord." Let us now remain in church for some time longer in order to devote ourselves to the exercises of devotion for the praise and glory of God.

PERORATION.

God grant that you may consider and practice what I have told you about the Lenten masses. The Church, by ordaining a proper mass with a proper epistle and gospel for every day of Lent, admonishes you to spend these days like Sundays and holidays, which also have a proper mass. Although you are not obliged in Lent to abstain from servile work as on Sundays and holidays, yet you must abstain from sin and dissipation. As the Church has ordained in the Lenten masses certain things which differ from the masses at other times, she calls upon you to lead a penitential life, for all these differences designate the forty days' fast as a time of penance. Sanctify Lent therefore and bring forth fruits worthy of penance. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

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5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

FIVE LOAVES OF BREAD FOR THE SANCTIFICATION OF MAN.

There is a boy here that hath five barley loaves.—John 6: 9.

In the gospel for to-day we see our Lord surrounded by a multitude of more than five thousand people, who never tire of hearing his holy word. The day is already far spent, and they have not had anything to eat, yet there seems to be no proba-

bility that they will obtain a morsel of food, for, far and near, not even a hut is to be seen. The Apostles and their Master are poor; it would have been a great expense to buy food for them all, and even if they had the money, where could they buy any, since they were so far away from human habitations? But stop, there is a boy here that hath five barley loaves—but what is that for so many! not five, but five thousand loaves, they should have to satisfy the hungry multitude. But behold! these five loaves in the hands of Jesus are multiplied in such a manner that they not only suffice to satisfy all the people, but more is left than there was at first, for they filled twelve baskets with the fragments.

PART I.

We possess five loaves of bread, which have a still more miraculous effect than the five loaves that were blessed by Christ, for our five loaves nourish our soul for eternal life.

The bread of doctrine. The bread of doctrine has two effects:

1. *It enlightens man, so that he knows what is for his salvation.* "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths."—*Ps.* 118: 105. How this bread of doctrine or the word of God enlightens men, we see in David. This king had the misfortune to committ two very grievous sins, adultery and murder. One would think that a man who was so well versed in the divine law as David, would at once have seen the greatness of his sin and understood into what misery his passion had plunged him. But no, he lived calmly for weeks and months, and probably would never have come to the knowledge of himself, if Nathan the Prophet had not healed him of his blindness. One day Nathan went before the king, and in emphatic words, upbraided him with his crime: and so the scales fall from his eyes, and his sin stood out before him in all its heinousness, and full of compunction he said: "I have sinned against the Lord."—*II. Kings* 12: 13. We have another example in the Jews at Jerusalem. When Peter for the first time preached to them the gospel on the feast of Pentecost "they had compunction in their heart; then they understood the grievousness of their sin in having crucified Jesus, and they said to Peter and the other Apostles: "What shall we do, men, and brethren?" But Peter said to them: "Do penance, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of yoar sins . . . They, therefore, that received his word, were baptized.—*Acts* 2: 37, 38. Now the word of God enlightens us to this day. How many sinners by hearing a sermon come to the knowledge of the wretched and dangerous condition of their soul, and resolve to do penance!

2. *It moves him to conversion.* The Apostle expresses this in these words: "For the word of God is living and effectual and more piercing than any two-edged sword; and reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit, of the joints also, and the marrow."—*Heb.* 4: 12. St. Jerome says: 'The preaching of the word of God is a plough, which loosens the soil of the soul, pulls up the roots of vice, and softens the hardness of the heart!" St. Peter Damian: The word of God is a fire that expels coldness and gives warmth to the soul, it is a hammer that softens the hardness of obstinacy." History and experience attest the efficacy of the word of God. Father James Laynes, by a sermon on Mary Magdalen converted upon one occasion eight women, who had publicly led a shameless life. Father Avila, in a single sermon on the forgiveness of injuries and offenses made so great an impression upon his hearers that those who had lived in enmity sought each other during the sermon, and, bathed in tears, shook hands in token of reconciliation. And how often does it happen, even in our days, that the word of God falls upon good ground and bears fruit? The preacher by all possible means tries to make an impression upon the hearts of sinners; he terrifies them by the tremendous judgment that awaits the impenitent sinner, he encourages them by pointing to God's infinite mercy, he describes to them the unhappy state of the sinner here and hereafter, the inexpressible felicity of the penitent, and endeavors to lead them back to God by depicting the joys of heaven, or the torments of hell. And sinners by the aid of God's grace return to themselves and begin to lead a life of penance. Truly, the word of God is bread, which nourishes our soul for eternal life. Accept this bread, as often as it is offered to you, with a grateful heart and employ it for your salvation.

PART II.

The bread of good example.

This bread is more excellent than that of doctrine, for example is better than precept; actions speak louder than words. It is good example that—

1. *Covers worldlings and sinners with wholesome confusion.* As the poor while looking at the treasures of the crown feel their poverty more sensibly, so we also understand and feel more keenly our poverty and sinfulness, the more the saints shine before us by their bright example. Oh, my Christian friend, if you consider the humility of the saints, which was so great *that they rejoiced* when they were treated as the vilest of men; their meekness, which even by the grossest offenses could not be overcome;

their love of God, which was prepared any moment to sacrifice everything for Christ, even life itself; their charity, which found its happiness in wiping away the tears of poverty and wretchedness; and if you compare yourselves with them, must you not, full of shame, cast down your eyes and say with a sigh: "Oh, what were the saints, and what am I!" And this shame, which the example of holy and pious Christians awakens in us, will urge us to correct our faults, forsake sin, and work out our salvation with greater fervor. The venerable Louis of Granada was one day disciplining himself. Two young men who were leading a life of debauchery perceived this just as they were on their way to a house of ill-fame. The sight made the deepest impression upon them. They said: "This saint, who lives like an angel, chastises his body, and we serve the lowest passions of the flesh! What kind of men are we?" And they were filled with so great and holy a horror of their past life that they renounced it at once, made a general confession to Father Louis, and henceforward served God with great fervor.

2. *Gives them courage and strength to control their passions and to renounce their sinful life.* Plants, such as vines and ivy, which can not raise themselves up, take hold of stronger plants or trees, in order to be supported by them. In like manner, good example is for imperfect persons and sinners a support, by which they can raise themselves up. St. Augustine was for many years a slave of the lowest passions; by little and little he came to see how odious his life was, but he felt too weak to break the fetters of sin. He considered the lives of the saints, and saw that thousands of them in the midst of the world, and under the greatest temptations, preserved their innocence; he saw that great sinners tore themselves away from vice, and dedicated the remainder of their life to God in the exercises of the most austere penance;—and these examples gave him courage, so that, full of determination he exclaimed: "If these could do this why can not I?" And from that moment he bade farewell to his worldly and sinful life, courageously began to do penance, and became a great saint. And how many may there be among us to whom good example was the impulse to conversion? They saw, for instance, how, at a mission, or a jubilee, this one or that gave up his sinful acquaintance, his night-prowling, his drinking and gambling, etc., made a good general confession, and become completely converted—and this example encouraged them to do the same.

3. *Powerfully works upon them and induces them to amend.* Abraham, the hermit, for a long time had taken all possible pains to convert the unbelievers, but no success was apparent. But when he was subjected to blows and calumnies, all of which

he bore with great patience, they felt themselves drawn to him with irresistible love. "See," they said, "the patience of this man: see his love for us; amidst all these tribulations and injuries he perseveres in the preaching of his doctrine. If his words were not of God, he certainly would not suffer so much for them. Come, let us believe in the God that he preaches to us." Yes, example is far better than precept, and, as St. Leo the Great says, we teach better by actions than by words. St. Chrysostom does not hesitate to say that by good example more souls are converted than by miracles and that without the example of the good almost all sinners would be lost.

From this a double lesson follows for us; first, we must look only to pious Christiaus and imitate them, and secondly, we must let our light shine in all our actions by means of a good example: "Be thou an example of the faithful, in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in chastity . . . that thy profiting may be manifest to all."—*I. Tim.* 4: 12, 15.

Part III.

The bread of tribulation. Very few care for this bread, "and when we pray: "Give us this day our daily bread", there is surely not one among us who entertains the will and desire that God should send him afflictions and tribulations for his daily bread. And yet it is an incontrovertible truth that tribulation is very good bread, and that it would he almost impossible without it to obtain the life of grace here and the life of glory hereafter. The bread of tribulation is very wholesome—

1. *For sinners.* If they had always a happy time, they would never resolve to give up their worldly and sinful life. We see with our own eyes that most sinners, so long as matters proceed according to their wish, never think of conversion and penance. They despise the interior aspirations of grace, neglect many opportunities which are given to them for penance, *disdain* the means of salvation, such as the word of God and the sacraments, or abuse them, thereby increasing their offenses against God. Then God sends them tribulations, and these it is that put a stop to their sinful life. If they are reduced to poverty, rejected and abandoned by all; it they are prostrated upon a sick-bed, then they learn how deceitful the world is, and how vain and perishable is everything earthly; they are unable owing to the want of means or of health to continue their sinful life. Thus, with the aid of divine grace they come little by little to the turning-point; they abandon the world and sin, and like the prodigal son (*Luke* 15: 17-20), full of contrition and compunction, they return to God and to their father's house. On the general judgment-day we shall

see with astonishment how many sinners owe their salvation to the bread of tribulation.

2. *For the just.* If in summer the air is for a long time calm, various injurious vapors are formed, from which great storms, with thunder and lightning, or even plagues and sicknesses, result. It would be so in the life of men, if they always enjoyed good times; they would forget God more and more, become heedless, and fall into the snares of the devil. As long as David was obliged to undergo the fatigues of wars, and nowhere had rest, he walked in the fear of God; afterwards when he had rest and enjoyments in his palace, he went so far astray that he committed adultery and murder. And what effect had prosperity on King Solomon? The once wise and pious king defiled himself with idolatry. What a good thing it is therefore that God gives the bread of tribulation also to the just to taste, for this is to them an excellent means of virtue, because it draws their hearts from the world, enlivens and strengthens their fervor in the service of God, and stimulates them to aspire to heavenly goods. "We are chastised by the Lord, that we be not condemned with this world."—*I. Cor.* 11: 32.

Whether you are among the sinners or the just, receive cheerfully the bread of tribulation which God gives you, and eat it, though it be coarse and bitter to the taste. Consider that Christ himself entered into his glory by suffering, and no other way leads you to heaven than the way of the cross. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."—*Matt.* 16: 24.

PART IV.

The bread of confession. Daniel was cast into the lions' den. For six days he remained there with seven ferocious lions; although they did not harm him he was in danger of dying of hunger. God had compassion on him and sent the Prophet Habacuc to him, with the dinner of bread, etc., prepared for the reapers.—*Dan.* 14: 30-38. God sends such a one with bread to the sinner who lies in the den of the seven deadly sins and in imminent danger of death. This Habacuc with the bread is the priest, who rescues the sinner from eternal death by the Sacrament of Penance. Oh, how thankful we should be to our Lord for this bread. If we make a good confession we receive—

1. *The forgiveness of all sins committed after baptism,* be they ever so grievous or numerous, for Christ says in general terms: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them."—*John*

20: 23. And again: "Whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven."—*Matt.* 18: 18. Had we as many mortal sins on our conscience as there are stars in the firmament of heaven, they are forgiven us, if we make a good confession, the moment the priest pronounces over us the words of absolution. To him the words of the prophet apply: "If the wicked do penance for all his sins which he hath committed . . . living he shall live and shall not die. I will not remember all his iniquities that he hath done."—*Ezech.* 18: 21, 22.

2. *The remission of the eternal, and a part of the temporal, punishment.* He that commits a mortal sin renders himself guilty of the eternal punishment of hell, and he will most certainly incur it if he does not obtain the remission of the sin. But he that makes a good confession receives, besides the forgiveness of sin, the remission of the eternal punishment, though he may have deserved it a thousand times. Can a greater grace be thought of? And is it not also a great grace that in confession the punishments of purgatory are at least partly remitted?

3. *Sanctifying grace, and with it adoption as sons of God and the right to heaven.* The soul of him who makes a good confession is not only cleansed from the stains of sin, but also adorned with sanctifying grace. God, who beholds in the soul of the justified man his image again, takes pleasure in him and gives him his love. He even adopts him as his son, and gives him the right and title to heaven with all its joys. Oh, how happy is the sinner, even the greatest sinner, who makes a good confession! You all know what is necessary for a good confession. Endeavor always, and especially during Easter time, to confess candidly, sincerely, and with compunction of heart.

PART V.

The bread of holy communion. Of this bread Christ says: "I am the living bread, which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever, and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world."—*John* 6: 51, 52. With these words our divine Saviour expresses—

1. *What kind of bread he gives us.* "The bread which I will give is my flesh." The bread, therefore, which is given us in holy communion is not real bread like that with which he fed the five thousand men in the desert; it has only the form of bread, but in reality is the body of Christ, or Christ himself, true God and true man. Christ himself, the eternal truth, is our guarantee. God had shown a great grace to the Israelites in the desert,

where he daily fed them with the manna; but how infinitely greater is the grace which we Christians receive in holy communion, for we truly receive Christ himself, the incarnate Son of God, as he sits at the right hand of God! Oh! this is a grace of which the angels are not deemed worthy, for they are allowed only to behold Jesus, but not to receive him.

2. *What effects this bread produces in us.* "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." Therefore, the effect of holy communion is life everlasting. He that communicated worthily, preserves the *life of grace upon earth.* For holy communion, as the Council of Trent says, has the special effect of preserving us from mortal sin. The reason is, because holy communion, on the one hand, weakens our predominant passion and our natural inclination to evil, and, on the other, strengthens us that we may overcome all the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. He that preserves the life of grace upon earth has the assurance that he will receive *life everlasting in heaven.* Therefore, by holy communion we become partakers of the greatest goods we can wish for, sanctifying grace and everlasting life.

And yet there are so many who have not the least desire for holy communion; who stay away from the table of the Lord for a whole year, and would not even communicate at Easter if they were not, as it were, compelled to do so by a precept of the Church. Oh, follow not in the footsteps of these lukewarm, negligent Catholics; on the contrary, esteem yourselves happy that you have the opportunity of being able to go often to communion, but at every communion think of the words of the Apostle: "Let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice, for he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord."—*I. Cor.* 11; 28, 29.

PERORATION.

These are the five loaves of bread which the grace of God has prepared for the nourishment of your soul. Accept them with a grateful heart from the hand of God and employ them for your salvation. Love to hear the word of God, which is preached to you so often, and make it the rule of your life. Look frequently at the example of the saints and pious Christians, in order to be encouraged thereby to serve God. Follow Christ gladly on the way of the cross, that you may also be allowed to follow him into the glory of heaven. Receive the holy Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist frequently and always with a heart well

prepared, that thus you may become partakers of the great graces which are connected with the worthy reception of these holy sacraments. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

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6. MORAL SKETCH.

HOW WE ARE TO GO TO COMMUNION.

Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed to them that were set down.—*John* 6: 11.

The Church reads for us to-day the gospel in which is related the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes, in order to direct our attention to the Most Holy Eucharist, which we are to receive at Easter. Our Lord had wrought a great miracle by multiplying five loaves of bread and two fishes, so that five thousand men, besides the women and children, were filled, and twelve baskets of fragments remained. But he works a still greater and more glorious miracle at Easter. He gives us in holy communion, not earthly bread, but himself, his sacred flesh and precious blood, as he assures us: "The bread that I will give, is my flesh for the life of the world."—*John* 6: 52. He feeds, not only five thousand people, but many millions. He feeds all Catholics who approach his table of grace. He gives us a food which nourishes the soul and infuses into the mortal body the germ of immortality and glory, as he again assures us: "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life; and I will raise him up in the last day."—*John* 6: 55.

Oh, that we all may receive this divine food worthily at this holy time! Oh, that none may communicate sacrilegiously! As St. Gregory the Great informs us, it was a custom in the early days of Christianity for a deacon to cry out with a loud voice to the faithful when they went to communion: *Come with faith, fear, and love.* These words contain the best instruction for a worthy communion. Let us meditate on them to-day. We must go to communion—

I. With faith;
II. With fear;
III. With love.

PART I.

To receive communion worthily a *living faith* is necessary.

1. God forbade our first parents in paradise to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and threatened them with death should they do so. But they believed the father of lies rather than the word of eternal truth; they did not believe that the eating of the forbidden fruit would bring death to them; they therefore took of it and ate. The cause of their sin and death, which came upon them and their posterity, was *unbelief*. Now we have in the garden of the Church another tree, the fruit of which we must eat in order to recover the eternal life which was forfeited by the eating of the forbidden fruit. This tree of life with its precious fruit is holy communion. But that we may eat this fruit for our salvation, we must firmly believe what the Catholic Church teaches concerning it. We must believe that the sacred Host, which the priest gives us in holy communion, is truly Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, that the sacred Host, which appears to our senses to be bread, in reality is not bread, but the God-Man, Jesus Christ—the same Jesus Christ that once lived upon earth, and now sits at the right hand of God in heaven, and that nothing remains of the bread but only the form; finally, that Jesus Christ is not present *dead*, so that he does not see or hear, but *living*, with all his divine and human perfections and attributes. If we do not believe or voluntarily doubt these and other truths which the Catholic Church teaches concerning the blessed Eucharist, the food of life will be changed for us into deadly poison; we shall share the lot of our first parents, who, because they did not believe, took of the forbidden fruit, and ate death to themselves.

2. Perhaps you will say: "Well, we are not destitute of faith." I grant it, but is your faith a living faith? Are you, as often as you go to communion, penetrated by this thought: "I am now before Jesus, my Lord and my God. I will now receive him into my heart before whom Peter prostrated himself, exclaiming, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.'—*Luke* 5: 8. I will receive him whom the heavenly spirits adore with the profoundest veneration." This living faith is required for communion. Whence does it come that many are so cold, so void of devotion, and so distracted when they come to the table of the Lord? Undoubtedly from the fact that their faith is not living, they frequently are not conscious of their faith, they do not think of the presence of their God and Saviour. Hence their distractions and want of devotion, hence also the deplorable fact that they reap

little or no benefit from holy communion. Yes, want of faith is the reason why many receive communion unworthily. If they would seriously consider what they receive in holy communion, what sin they commit by receiving communion unworthily, and what terrible consequences an unworthy communion draws after it, they would not dare approach the altar with an unclean conscience. But because they do not consider all this, and consequently have no living faith, they care little or nothing whether they communicate sacrilegiously or not. On the day of their communion, though they have sinned so grievously, and laid perhaps the foundation for their eternal damnation, they are as calm and cheerful as if they had no reason to accuse themselves of the anything wrong. Oh, blind and deluded souls!

How necessary, then, it is that, in order to receive our communions worthily and profitably, we should have not only faith, but a living faith! Let us, therefore, recollect ourselves before we go to communion, and consider what we are doing, and who it is that we are to receive, in order that our faith may be a living faith.

PART II.

We frequently read in the gospel that people were seized with fear when Christ manifested his Godhead by a miracle. We need not wonder at this; how could weak, sinful man not be filled with holy awe when he beheld himself in the presence of God? It is also very natural that we should approach the altar *with fear.* This is very salutary, because it urges us to communicate *with a pure conscience and with profound veneration.*

1. Christ, at the Last Supper, before instituting the Blessed Eucharist, washed his disciples' feet, and thereby indicated that we must approach communion with a clean heart. It is truly a most solemn act to receive God, who is holiness itself, into our hearts. In order to receive communion worthily, we ought to be divinely pure and holy. But as is impossible for us, we must endeavor to the best of our ability to cleanse our heart from every stain of sin. It is absolutely necessary that we should be free from *every mortal sin.* He that knows he is defiled with a mortal sin, or could and should know it, and yet goes to communion, commits a horrible sacrilege; he renews the crime of the Jews who crucified Christ, and eats and drinks judgment to himself.—*I. Cor.* 11: 27-29. "A great crime among Christians, a crime that draws down terrible punishment on itself, is the unworthy reception of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in the Sacrament of his love. The desecrators of this adorable Sacrament will drink the cha-

lice of divine revenge throughout all eternity."—*St. John Damascene.*

Alas! it is to be feared that not a few will receive communion unworthily at this Easter time. And who will they be? Those who confess without contrition and a resolution of amendment; who are therefore determined to shun the occasions of sin, to give up their sinful familiarity, to stay away from the places where they have frequently sinned grievously, to forsake their bad habits, for example, cursing, blaspheming, getting drunk, and using immodest language. Those will communicate sacrilegiously who do not restore ill-gotten goods, who do not desist from their injustices in dealing with others and do not become reconciled to their neighbor; lastly, those who knowingly and willingly conceal a mortal sin in confession, diminish the number of their sins, or palliate or excuse a mortal sin so that it appears only a venial one. All these confess sacrilegiously, and, consequently, if they go to communion after such a sacrilegious confession, they make themselves guilty of a still greater sacrilege, greater by far than the Jews were guilty of when they shed the blood of Jesus and trampled it under their feet. Let us all consider this and at this time of Easter endeavor to cleanse our conscience by a sincere and contrite confession, that we may be enabled to communicate worthily.

2. We must go to the altar with *reverence.* If we conduct ourselves before the great of this world with becoming decorum, and are careful not to violate due respect, with what reverence should we be filled when we approach God himself and receive him into our heart! During this holy act beware of the least levity or disrespect. Show in your whole exterior the holy fear by which you are penetrated. Cast down your eyes, fold your hands, say your prayers on your knees, and do not venture to approach in unsuitable apparel the table of him who has said: "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart." Say, not only with your lips, but also from the bottom of your heart: "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed."

PART III.

Christ was not content with becoming man, teaching us, and finally suffering and dying for us; he also instituted the Blessed Eucharist, in order, after his departure to his heavenly Father, to dwell among us—nay, to come into our heart and to unite himself most intimately with us, that we might become, as it were, one with him, and say with the Apostle: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me."—*Gal.* 2: 20. This is a love which we

may admire, but can never comprehend. If Christ so loved us, what kind of persons should we be if we did not love him, and if the most ardent love did not animate us as often as we have the happiness of receiving him in holy communion?

1. But how does this love manifest itself? Principally *by an ardent desire to unite ourselves with Jesus in holy communion.* He that loves wishes to be united with the object of his love. If, therefore, we love Christ, we shall long with the greatest ardor for holy communion, because this enables us to unite ourselves most intimately with our Saviour. The saints desired nothing so ardently as holy communion. When St. Philip Neri was lying on his death-bed, and the holy Viaticum was given to him, he exclaimed: "Behold here is my love, behold here is my love, oh, give me my love!"

2. Where there is love, there is a desire for Christ in holy communion, and the greater and more ardent the love, the greater and more ardent is also the desire. What then shall I say of those who wait a whole year and even longer without having a desire for holy communion; of those who, although they go to communion at Easter, do not go with a desire for communion, but because the Church commands it, of those to whom Easter is the most distasteful season of the year because they can not well withdraw themselves from confession and communion; of those who, if Easter were to be every ten years, would go to confession and communion only every ten years? What can we say of them but that they have no love at all for Jesus, that they receive communion either unworthily, or without profit? Look into your own heart and ask yourselves: How do matters stand with me? Have I a desire for communion? And accordingly as you must affirm or deny the question, you can easily judge whether you love Jesus or not, whether you receive communion worthily and profitably or not.

PERORATION.

In conclusion, I beg you to consider that on your conduct towards Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist and at holy communion, depends the salvation of your soul. Make therefore the resolution to-day, to go to communion at Easter time, and at all times, with *faith*, *fear*, and *love*. Communicate *with faith* saying: Jesus, my Lord and my God, is present; I receive him the infinitely holy, my Redeemer and Judge. Communicate *with fear*, see whether your heart is free from every mortal sin, for the infinitely pure and immaculate God can not dwell in an impure heart. Communicate *with love* and therefore excite within yourselves

an ardent desire to be united with Jesus as often as your circumstances allow it. Communicate, not only at Easter, but frequently during the year, with *faith*, *fear* and *love*, then you will always communicate worthily, and the word of Christ will be verified in you: "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day."—*John* 6: 55. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

7. MORAL SKETCH.

CHRISTIAN BENEVOLENCE.

Jesus took ***the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed*** *to them that were set down.*—*John* 6: 11.

In the gospel for this day Christ exhibits himself as the friend and benefactor of men. After healing the infirm who were brought to him, he went over the Sea of Galilee, again to do good. There, in the desert, where a great multitude had gathered around him, he soon found an opportunity of showing his charity and mercy. The people were hungry; they had eaten nothing all day, it was towards evening, and they were still fasting. What does Christ do? By his omnipotence he works a great miracle, multiplies five loaves of bread and two fishes, so that five thousand had sufficient.

This wonderful occurrence is not intended to be the mere recital of a story; no, it is more than this, it is an example—nay, a commandment—for us; for Christ is our example, and what he has done we must do also, as he says himself: "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also."—*John* 13: 15. I will speak to-day of Christian benevolence, and explain to you—

I. That we must be benevolent;
II. That we can be benevolent.

PART I.

Benevolence is considered by all a beautiful and commendable virtue, but many will not believe that we *are obliged* to practice

it. And yet we are obliged to do so. It is a strict duty to be benevolent, and he that does not comply with it can scarcely be saved.

1. *Reason* convinces us of this truth. God has given the earth to men for their common possession, as a father leaves his property to all his children in common. "This earth is nothing else than the common inheritance of men." The distinction between *mine* and *thine* was first introduced by the law of nations. God sanctioned the division and appropriation of the originally common goods, but so that the rich and wealthy should not leave their poor brethren in a helpless condition. "The rich," says St. Gregory, "must give of their abundance to the poor, for they are not the masters, but only the stewards of the goods entrusted to them." The proprietor of all we have is God; it is our strict duty to make use of everything according to his will. But he has given us much, for no other reason than that out of our abundance we should succor the needy and suffering. The steward acts unjustly when he uses the goods entrusted to him against the will of the proprietor: we do the same, if, of our abundance, we do not give to the poor. "Defraud not the poor of alms, and turn not away thy eyes from the poor."—*Ecclus.* 4: 1. St. Basil replied to a miser, who said that he was doing no wrong by keeping his own: "You say you are doing no wrong by keeping your own. What belongs to you? Did you not come forth naked from your mother's womb? Will you not return into the earth? Whence did you obtain your present possessions? If you say, by a fortuitous accident, you are impious, because you do not know your Creator. But if you admit that you have received it from God, forget not for what purpose God gave it to you. God is not unjust; by blessing you with affluence, and placing another in poverty, he wished that you should obtain the reward of mercy and of a faithful stewardship, and he the reward of conformity to his holy will."

2. *The natural law which God has written in every man's heart.* This is: "Do unto others what you would wish others to do unto you." What does every man wish when he is in necessity? Is it not that he sould be succored? He therefore who is not benevolent, and does not assist the poor and indigent, sins against the natural law. We see that those who had no special revelation from God were convinced of the duty of benevolence and practiced it. Job lived among the Gentiles and before the time of Moses; he had, therefore, and could have, no knowledge of the Mosaic law, and yet he said: "If I have denied to the poor what they desired, and have made the eyes of the widow wait, if I have eaten my morsel alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof; . . . if I have despised him that was perishing for want

of clothing, and the poor man that had no covering . . . let my shoulder fall from its joint, and let my arm with its bones be broken."—*Job* 31 : 16, 17, 19, 22. The better-disposed among the Gentiles, who observed the natural law, were benevolent to the poor, and succored the needy. The Emperor Titus considered every day lost on which he had no opportunity of doing a favor to somebody, saying: *Diem perdidi* (I have lost a day.). What then do you do, O Christian, who stop your ears against the entreaties of the poor, the widow and the orphans? You sin against the natural law, and make yourself lower than the Gentiles.

3. *The Old Law of the Jews.* Imperfect as this law was, being given for an unrefined people, it contained a multitude of ordinances which most emphatically inculcated mercy to the poor and needy. Thus, this law decreed that the land should not be tilled in the seventh year, and whatever would grow spontaneously should be given to the poor.—*Ex.* 23 : 11. Moreover they were not to cut the corn down to the ground, nor to gather the ears that remained but some were to be left for the poor and for the strangers.—*Lev.* 23 : 22. To induce the Israelites to be benevolent, God promised them large rewards for the exercise of this virtue, and threatened them with great punishments if they were hard and unmerciful towards the poor. "He that giveth to the poor shall not want; he that despiseth his entreaty, shall suffer indigence."——*Prov.* 28: 27. "He that stoppeth his ear against the cry of the poor, shall also cry himself, and shall not be heard."—*Prov.* 21 : 13.

4. *The New Law of the Christians.* Christ placed the love of our neighbor side by side with the love of God, and declared it to be a new law, by the observance of which we must show ourselves to be his disciples: "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you . . . By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another."—*John* 13 : 34, 35. Benevolence is an exercise of love; he, therefore, who is not benevolent and merciful towards the poor, has no love, and violates the principal law of Christ. Hence St. John says: "He that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his bowels from him, how doth the charity of God abide in him?"—*I. John* 3: 17.

This is also evident from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. It is said of the rich man, that when he died he was buried in hell, and was grievously tormented in the flames. He died a bad death and was condemned to the everlasting torments of hell. And why? Was it on account of various grievous sins

which he had committed? No, for such are not laid to his charge in the parable; the reason of his condemnation is to be sought in his want of mercy to poor Lazarus, who lay at his gate, full of sores, desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, and no one did give him. Because he left this poor man without help he was damned. Therefore, St. Augustine says: "Reflect on what happened to Dives, who was clothed in purple and fine linen; he was not condemned because he had appropriated to himself the goods of others, but because he gave not of his substance to poor Lazarus; cast into hell, he was obliged to beg for *a drop* of water, because he had refused on earth *a crumb* of bread.

Moreover, our Saviour declares most emphatically, that the omission of works of mercy is a *sin*, which draws eternal damnation after it. Will not the Judge say to those who stand at his left: "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave me not to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me not to drink; I was a stranger and you took me not in: naked, and you covered me not". And to the question of the reprobate: "Lord, when did we see thee hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked . . . and did not minister to thee?" he will reply: "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it not to one of these least, neither did you do it to me."—*Matt.* 25: 41-45. Here it is plainly said that not only thieves, robbers, murderers, fornicators, adulterers, extortioners, and other great sinners, shall go to hell, but also those who are unmerciful to the poor and needy. Christian charity, then, is not only a counsel, but a duty, a strict precept, on the observance of which depends life everlasting. The question now is: "Can we fulfil this law and be benevolent?"

PART II.

In whatever state of life we are, in whatever circumstances we live, we can be benevolent.

1. To fulfil the duty of benevolence, it is not required that *we give much;* it suffices to *give what we are able.* The rule which the elder Tobias gave to his son holds good: "If thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little."—*Tob.* 4: 9. Those also who have not much can fulfil the duty of Christian benevolence, for God regards the will more than the deed. The poor widow who put only two mites into the treasury, put in more comparatively than all the others, some of whom put in much, for, as Jesus says: "All they did cast in of their abundance, but she, of her want, cast in all she had, even her whole living."—*Mark* 12: 44. He that gives

the little that he is able to give willingly and cheerfully, has greater merit before God than have the rich who, frequently from ostentation rather than for the love of God, give large alms.

2. Christ reckons among the works of benevolence such as even *the poorest can give.* He says: "I was thirsty, and you gave me not to drink." Where is there a man so poor that he can not give a little water to a thirsty man? It is frequently by something small and insignificant that we can do an important act of kindness and charity. Examples: Rebecca, who gave the servant of Abraham and his camels to drink.—*Gen.* 24: 17, etc. Moses, who protected the daughters of the priest of Madian against the violent shepherds, so that they could water their sheep and return home early.—*Ex.* 2: 16, etc.

3. Christian charity can be exercised, not only by alms, but also by various other acts of kindness. If, for instance, you lend money to a man and thereby help him out of a difficulty, if you have patience with your debtor and give him time till he can pay his debt, if you procure work for a poor man who is able and willing to work, if by good counsel or recommendation you help him to get a situation, all these are exercises of Christian benevolence, and frequently are more beneficial than large alms.

4. Even those who have nothing can be benevolent; they need nothing for this but good will. He that can give nothing to the poor and needy can at least pity them and have compassion on them. St. Gregory Nazianzen says: "Give cheerfully and you have given much. But if you have nothing else, give tears. Compassion from a sincere heart is a precious remedy for the unfortunate." St. Gregory the Great calls compassion a more precious alms than any other gift, "for," says the saint, "he that gives money, gives what is without him, but he that gives sympathy to the unfortunate gives something of himself." Therefore St. Augustine also says: "If you are able to give, give; if you can give nothing, give friendly words. The Lord crowns the good will where he finds no worldly substance. Let nobody say: I have nothing; love is not taken out of the purse. If you can give nothing else, give sympathy, and God will graciously receive your alms."

5. Lastly, charity can be exercised by *prayer.* All Christians, even those who can no longer be active, as the aged and the sick, can pray with firm faith and ardent love; they can, if they will, pray always and everywhere, and our holy religion teaches us that by our fervent and believing prayer we can do more good to our fellow-men than by alms. In the year 350 the city of Ni-

sibis was besieged by Sapor II., King of Persia; Jacob, the holy bishop of that city, mounted the wall of the city and implored the help of the Lord against the unbelievers. God heard his prayer, for suddenly there came swarms of flies which crept into the trunks of the elephants and the ears of the beasts of burden, and made them so furious that they caused the greatest confusion in the camp, and Sapor was compelled to raise the siege.

PERORATION.

There is no man upon earth, as you see, who can not in some way be merciful towards his neighbor; the rich and the poor, the high and the low, the healthy and the sick, the children and the aged,—all can practice the virtue of benevolence if they only have a good will. Remembering the example of Christ, who by multiplying the loaves in a miraculous manner fed a great multitude, let us be encouraged to do good to all wherever and however we can. Let us also consider that hard-heartedness towards the poor and needy is a sin which God particularly hates and severely punishes, and that we can hope for God's mercy if we show ourselves merciful and charitable towards our neighbor. St. Jerome says: "I do not remember ever to have read that he who had practiced works of mercy died a bad death. Such a man has so many intercessors that it is impossible for their prayers to remain unheard." Be you therefore merciful, and you shall obtain mercy. Amen.

PASSION SUNDAY.

EPISTLE. *Heb.* 9: 11-15. Brethren, Christ being come a high-priest of the good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is, not of this creation, neither by the blood of goats, nor of calves, but by his own blood, entered once into the Holies, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and of oxen, and the ashes of an heifer being sprinkled, sanctify such as are defiled, to the cleansing of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Holy Ghost offered himself without spot to God, cleanse our conscience from dead works, to serve the living God? And therefore he is Mediator of the new testament: that by means of his death for the redemption of those transgressions, which were under the former testament, they that are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

THE HIGH-PRIESTHOOD AND SACRIFICE OF CHRIST.

The lesson for to-day is a small portion of the epistle which St. Paul wrote to the Hebrews, that is, to the Christians converted in Palestine from Judaism. Among these there were many who still clung to the Mosaic Law, who sought to unite the Jewish religion with the Christian, and who, therefore, wished to be Jews and Christians at one and the same time. Moreover, the Jews who stubbornly adhered to the old religion, and by nothing, not even by numerous miracles, could be induced to embrace Christianity, had persecuted the newly-converted, their own brethren, in a terrible manner, depriving them of their property and reducing them to the greatest misery. These Jewish Christians needed very much to be instructed and strengthened in their faith. The Apostle did this in the epistle which he wrote to them, and in which he showed them that the Jewish Law was abrogated and had given place to the Christian and he admonished them to constancy in faith. The lesson of this day contains the following truths:

I. That the high-priesthood of Christ is much more excellent than that of the Jews.

II. That the sacrifice of Christ is much more effectual than the sacrifices of the Jews.

PART I.

1. The Apostle designates Jesus Christ as the high-priest of the *good things to come.* By these good things we are to understand the treasures of grace which our divine Saviour has acquired for us, viz., the forgiveness of sin, sanctifying grace, the love and favor of God, and the inheritance of heaven. They are called *good things to come,* in opposition to those things for which the high-priest in the Old Law offered sacrifice. He could obtain for them by prayer and sacrifice goods pertaining to this present life, but for the obtaining of the good things to come, which refer to the future life and make man eternally happy, he could do nothing. Here observe one prerogative of the high-priesthood of Jesus Christ superior to that of the Jews. The Jews could expect nothing from their high-priest but temporal and perishable things; we Christians have a high-priest from whose hands not only temporal, but also supernatural and eternal goods flow to us, for to him we owe everything that is necessary for our salvation.

If Jesus Christ is the high-priest of the good things to come, we must above all things desire these goods and aspire to them. To seek and love nothing but what the world has and gives, and to pray only for temporal things, would betray a low sentiment, unworthy of a Christian. We may, indeed, pray for temporal goods, such as life, health, prosperity, and esteem such goods and try to preserve them, but only in so far as they are necessary and beneficial for our salvation, or so far as they are not dangerous. Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all other things shall be added unto you, so far as they are conducive to your eternal welfare.

2. The Apostle says that *Christ by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is, not of this creation, entered once into the Holies.* By tabernacle we understand, first, the holy tabernacle of the Israelites. This tabernacle was a portable temple, somewhat resembling a tent, and so constructed that it could be easily taken apart; it was similar to the tabernacle of pastoral tribes, and consisted of a *vestibule* and *sanctuary.* The vestibule, which was two hundred feet long and one hundred wide, was intended for the people as a place of prayer. Next to the vestibule came the sanctuary, which had two apartments, of which the smaller was called the Holy of Holies, and the larger

the sanctuary proper. The people were not allowed to enter into the sanctuary proper, but only the priests; from the Holy of Holies even the priests were excluded. It contained the Ark of the Covenant, wherein were placed the two tables of the Law, a vessel with manna, and Aaron's rod, over which was the Mercy Seat. Only the high-priest was allowed once a year, on the great day of Atonement, to enter this place for the purpose of offering the prescribed sacrifice. The Apostle says: Christ is greater then the Jewish high-priest, because he entered by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is, not of this creation, into the Holy of Holies. What kind of tabernacle is this? According to most interpreters of the Sacred Scripture, this tabernacle is the *Church of Christ.* The Church of Christ is a *higher, i. e.*, a larger tabernacle than that of the Jews, for it extends over the whole earth, whilst the Jewish Church was confined to one people; she is more perfect, because she truly purifies her members from sin, sanctifies them and shews them the way of eternal salvation, whilst the Jewish Church had no effectual means of salvation, and only prepared the way for Christianity; she is not made with hands, that is, not of this creation, as the tabernacle of the Jews, but founded by Jesus Christ, the God-Man. The sanctuary into which Jesus Christ entered after the accomplishment of his work of redemption, is greater and more excellent than that into which the Jewish high-priest entered once a year, for it is heaven, where he sits at the right hand of his Omnipotent Father.

We have the happiness of being in the tabernacle of Christ, in his holy Catholic Church. Let us conscientiously fulfil our duties as Catholics and diligently avail ourselves of the means of grace which the Church offers us, that we may one day have the happiness of entering with Jesus into the Holy of Holies, that is, into heaven.

3. The Apostle says that Christ entered not into the Holy of Holies by the blood of goats, nor of calves, but by his own blood. In the Old Law the high-priest entered the Holy of Holies on the feast of Atonement, carrying with him the blood of the slaughtered victim with which he sprinkled the pavement in the sight of the Lord. Our High-priest did infinitely more: he did not offer goats and calves, but he immolated himself, shedding for us the last drop of his blood on the cross. What are all the sacrifices of the Jews compared with this?

Let us call to mind this sacrifice in this holy season of Lent, which is instituted in memory of the bitter passion and death of Christ, and resolve in grateful love to make sacrifices. Let us mortify our inordinate inclinations, for example, vanity, anger, avarice, impurity, and bear with patience and resignation the

hardships incident to our state of life; let us deprive ourselves of some meat, drink, or sleep, bridle our senses, especially the eyes and the tongue; these are sacrifices which please our Saviour and merit many graces for us.

4. Lastly, the Apostle says: *Jesus entered once into the Holies having obtained eternal redemption.* In the Old Law, the sacrifices of oxen, goats, and calves were constantly renewed, the high-priest was obliged to enter into the Holy of Holies every year, to offer the sacrifice of Expiation and to sprinkle the blood. It is quite different in the New Law. Our High-priest need not renew his sacrifice yearly and again shed his blood: he entered only once into the Holy of Holies, he offered himself for us only once on the cross, a bleeding victim, and effected thereby eternal redemption. The blood which he once shed on the cross redeemed the whole human race for all time. What our Saviour acquired and merited by his sacrifice on the cross can be destroyed neither by the malice of men nor by the cunning of the devil. Notwithstanding that countless sins are daily committed, the sacrifice which Jesus offered for us on the altar of the cross enables all men, even those who groan in the deepest misery of sin, to obtain forgiveness and to be saved. This holy sacrifice Christ renews daily by the hands of his priests in the holy mass, and by it causes all merits to flow to us which he has acquired by his bloody sacrifice on the cross. Moreover, he is also our Mediator with the Father in heaven, wherefore St. John writes: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the just; and he is the propitation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world."—*I. John* 2 : 1, 2.

Thus the priesthood of Jesus Christ far transcends that of the Jews, for the latter was but a shadow and type of the former, and was to cease as soon as Christ, our High-priest, had offered his sacrifice on the cross. For this reason at the death of Christ the veil of the temple was rent in twain, to signify that the old priesthood, with its sacrifices, was abrogated.

Part II.

To show that the sacrifice of Christ is more effectual than that of the Jews, the Apostle first describes the effects of the sacrifices under the Old Law, and then the effects of the sacrifice under the New Law.

He says that: *the blood of goats and of oxen, and the ashes of an heifer being sprinkled, sanctify such as are defiled, to the cleansing of the flesh.* St. Paul here speaks of the sacrifices of the

Jews and the purifications according to the law. The blood of goats and oxen served, on the feast of Atonement especially, which was celebrated every year on the tenth day of the seventh month, for the cleansing of the holy place from the uncleanness of the children of Israel, of the high-priest and his family, and of all the people. The high-priest offered a calf as a sacrifice for the sins of himself and his house, and two goats for the sins of the people before the sanctuary. Then he slaughtered the calf and one of the goats, upon which the lot had fallen, and, entering into the Holy of Holies, sprinkled, first with the blood of the calf and then with the blood of the goat, the ark and the pavement before it; then he sprinkled, with the blood of both, the golden altar of incense and its four horns, in order to purify the holy place from the sins of the Israelites. Lastly, he offered a burnt offering and sin offering.—*Lev.* 16. Places and persons that were legally impure were sprinkled with the blood of the animals offered in sacrifices at other times, in order to be purified again. The ashes of the cow were used for this particular purpose. As often as necessary (when the ashes had all been used) a red cow of full age and without blemish, and which had never worn a yoke, was selected. The high-priest took her from the hands of the people, led her before the camp, and later, when they lived in Palestine, out of the city of Jerusalem. There, before the eyes of all, she was slaughtered and burnt. The ashes were gathered and carefully preserved. These ashes, mingled in water (as with us the salt is put in holy water), served as a means of purification for those who had defiled themselves in any way. To this class belonged all who had sinned against the law and all who had contaminated themselves by certain actions or by touching certain persons or things declared impure by the law; as the leprous, women in labor, dead bodies, etc. Such contaminated persons were considered to be unholy and no longer belonging to the chosen people; they were not allowed to participate in the sacred ceremonies, and were excluded from the temple and public intercourse with the people. If any one needed purification, he was sprinkled with the water in which some of the ashes of the cow had been mingled.—*Num.* 19. By this means he was freed from the defilement contracted and from the punishments threatened by the law, and was sanctified, in the sense that he was reinstated in his former rights. The sacrifices of the Jews had by no means the virtue of purifying man from sin, of justifying him before God and of sanctifying him; their whole effect consisted in this, that those who had defiled themselves were declared clean exteriorly, in the eyes of men.

But it is quite different with the sacrifice which Jesus Christ offered for us. *This*, the Apostle says, *is an unspotted sacrifice, which cleanses our conscience from dead works, to serve the liv*

ing God. By *dead works* we are to understand sins; they are called dead works, because they deprive man of the supernatural life, which is sanctifying grace, and make him guilty of eternal death, which is damnation. The unspotted sacrifice which Jesus offered for us on the cross in a bloody manner, and which he daily renews in the holy mass, and will renew till the end of the world in an unbloody manner, frees us from these dead works. All sins, original as well as actual, are expiated by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Therefore St. Paul elsewhere says: "In whom (Jesus Christ) we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins, according to the riches of his grace."—*Ephes.* 1: 7. And St. John says: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."—*I. John* 1: 7.

How much better off are we than the Jews in the Old Law! All their sacrifices were without interior effect, they had not even the virtue of cleansing man from a venial sin, much less from a mortal one. Our sacrifice has, in truth, a purifying and sanctifying power, for Jesus Christ has made by his sacrifice a perfect—nay, a superabundant satisfaction to God for our sins, and if we but receive the sacraments worthily, we shall be cleansed from all our sins, even the greatest and most grievous; we shall be sanctified, and become heirs of heaven. Oh! how much does the sacrifice of Christ transcend all the sacrifices of the Jews!

The sacrifice of Christ enables us to serve the *living God.* So long as man is not cleansed from sin he can not serve God, that is, he can do nothing that would have a supernatural value and be meritorious for heaven. The good works which he performs may bring him temporal blessings and perhaps graces for his salvation, but for eternity they are and remain without merit. But if he is justified and sanctified, a living member of the body of Christ, he can serve God, and everything he does with a good intention, even the most insignificant thing, such as giving a little water to a thirsty person, has a supernatural value, and is rewarded in heaven. Thus, again, we owe it to the sacrifice which our divine Saviour offered for us that we can serve God, as we must serve him, and in this service acquire the eternal goods of heaven.

PERORATION.

At the conclusion of the lesson for this day the Apostle says that Jesus Christ because he offered not, as the Jewish high-priest did, the blood of animals, but himself, became the Mediator of the new covenant between God and man, that through his death all that are called, Jews and Gentiles, may receive the eternal inheritance. Since Jesus Christ offered himself on the cross for

all men and merited for all men the forgiveness of sins and the graces necessary for salvation, all can be saved. Let us do what is required on our part in order to appropriate to ourselves the fruits of redemption. Be firm in your faith, obey the commandments of God and avail yourselves of the means of grace and salvation, and you will attain eternal life. Amen.

PASSION SUNDAY.

GOSPEL. *John* 8: 46-59. At that time Jesus said to the multitudes of the Jews: Which of you shall convince me of sin? If I say the truth to you, why do you not believe me? He that is of God, heareth the words of God. Therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God. The Jews therefore answered, and said to him: Do not we say well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? Jesus answered: I have not a devil: but I honor my Father, and you have dishonored me. But I seek not my own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth. Amen, amen, I say to you: If any man keep my word, he shall not see death for ever. The Jews therefore said: Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest: If any man keep my word, he shall not taste death for ever. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? and the prophets are dead. Whom dost thou make thyself? Jesus answered: If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father that glorifieth me, of whom you say that he is your God. And you have not known him, but I know him. And if I shall say that I know him not, I shall be like to you, a liar. But I do know him, and do keep his word. Abraham your father rejoiced that he might see my day: he saw it, and was glad. The Jews therefore said to him: Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said to them: Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham was made, I am. They took up stones therefore to cast at him. But Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple.

2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

EXPLANATION OF THE GOSPEL, AND LESSONS FROM IT.

What the gospel for this day relates to us occurred at Jerusalem, on the feast of tabernacles. The hatred and envy of the Scribes and Pharisees against Christ had reached its climax. They had sent their ministers to apprehend him whilst he was preaching. But these were so captivated by his words that they departed without having effected their purpose, and full of enthusiasm said; "Never did man speak like this man."—*John* 7: 46. The next day the Scribes and Pharisees brought before him an adulteress, and proposed to him the question whether, according to the law of Moses, she should be stoned or ot. They thought that Jesus owing to his leniency would acquit her, in which case they would have had reason for condemning him as a violator of the law. But Christ confounded their cunning with the words: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."—*John* 8: 7. When, after these occurrences, Christ continued to teach in the temple, they interrupted him by various malicious questions, and blasphemies, which the gospel of this day records. Let us then hear—

I. How this gospel is to be understood;
II. What we ought to learn from it.

PART I.

When Christ severely reproached the Scribes and Pharisee for their unbelief, they began to quarrel with him, to insult him, and to blaspheme in a most horrible manner.

1. *Which of you shall convince me of sin? If I say the truth to you, why do you not believe me?* The drift of these words is: He who lives a perfectly holy life deserves belief, for such a one does not lie. Now if my life is so holy that even my greatest enemies can not rise up against me and convince me of sin I certainly speak the truth and all that I teach is worthy of credence. Our Saviour also assigns the reason why the Jews do not believe in him, saying: *He that is of God, heareth the words of God; therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God.*" The Jews, and particularly the Scribes and Pharisees, did not refuse to believe in our Lord because they could convince him of a sin or a delusion, but only because they were corrupt—men who were not guided and governed by the spirit of God, but by the devil.

They were not children of God, but children of the devil; therefore they would neither hear the word of God, which Jesus preached to them, nor believe in it.

2. The severe reproach which Christ administered to the Jews on account of their unbelief made them very angry, and not being able to refute him with arguments they broke out into insults and blasphemies: *Do we not say well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil*? The Samaritans, originally Gentiles, took possession of the lands which the Israelites who were led into the Assyrian captivity had occupied. In the course of time they accepted a part of the law of the Jews, but retained a great deal of Gentilism and were half Jew and half Gentile. The Jews entertained a violent hatred against them, and to call one a Samaritan was as much as to call him a heretic or an arch-enemy of the Jews. But the Jews were not content with this insult. They went still further, and called him a man that has a devil. A more horrid blasphemy could scarcely be imagined.

3. Christ answered: *I have not a devil; but I honor my Father, and you have dishonored me. But I seek not my own glory; there is one that seeketh and judgeth.*

Peter rightly applied to Christ the words of the Prophet: "Who, when he was reviled, did not revile; when he suffered, he threatened not."—*I. Pet.* 2: 23. To the first blasphemy, that he was a Samaritan, he made no reply, because it was directed only against his person, and its falsehood was evident to every one from the fact that he fulfilled the law most punctually. The second blasphemy, that he had a devil, he refuted, because it affected the honor of God; but he did it without any bitterness, he proved to his blasphemers the absurdity of their blasphemy, since he was doing the very contrary to what the devil does, for he honored God, whilst the devil does not honor him, but endeavors to keep man by all the means he can employ from the worship of God. At the same time he indicated to them that God, his heavenly Father, does not suffer himself to be dishonored with impunity, and that they may now expect the severest chastisements for their blasphemies.

4. In order, if possible, to change their hearts, disregarding their blasphemies, he continues to instruct them and makes them a most glorious promise, if they receive his word with a believing heart, and live accordingly: *Amen, amen, I say to you: If any man keep my word, he shall not see death for ever.* There is a threefold death: the *natural*, which consists in the separation of the soul from the body; the *moral*, which we incur by every mortal sin, because it robs the soul of supernatural life, or sanctifying

grace; the *eternal*, which is eternal damnation. If we accept the word of God and make it the rule of our life it protects us against this threefold death. It preserves us from the *natural death*, not in the sense that we should never die, but in this that it divests death of all its horrors, and changes it, as it were, into a gentle sleep, making it appear as a transition to a better life, and uniting it with the blessed hope of a glorious resurrection. It preserves from the *moral death*, for if we observe it conscientiously we commit no sin, but persevere in the state of grace, and, finally, it preserves from *everlasting death*, for if we die in the state of grace we have nothing to fear, for our way leads directly to heaven.

5. The Jews did not understand the words of Christ; they thought he promised that if they would receive his word and obey it, they would live for ever upon earth. This they considered unheard-of pride, nay, madness. Therefore they said: *Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest: If any man keep my word, he shall not taste death for ever. Art thou greater than our Father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Whom dost thou make thyself?* They meant to say, these venerable and holy men, with all their holiness, could not escape death, and you will make all immortal that adhere to you. Are you not out of your senses? Has the devil robbed you of all understanding that you assert such nonsense?

6. Our Lord shows them that he does not exalt himself nor lay claim to an honor which is not due to him; that, on the contrary, God his Father, whom they know not, honors him, but that he knows him, and would be a liar like them if he should say that he does not know him. In these words Christ declares that, as the Son of God, he possesses the most perfect knowledge of God, his Father—a knowledge such as no created being, whether man or angel, has, and that it is he through whom men come to the knowledge of God, as he says elsewhere: "No one knoweth who the Father is, but the Son, and to whom the Son will reveal him."—*Luke* 10: 22. The remark of Christ, that he keeps the Father's word, means that he does everything that his Father wills, and that this is the best proof that he knows him. For the more one knows God, the more one feels one's self impelled to serve him; and the more one serves God, the more one grows in the knowledge of God.

7. The Jews having reproached Christ for depreciating their progenitor Abraham, he rejects the reproach by praising Abraham, but in such a way as to give testimony to the truth and to

set himself above Abraham: *Abraham, your father, rejoiced that he might see my day; he saw it, and was glad.* That is to say, when Abraham was yet sojourning on earth, he rejoiced that according to the repeated promise of God (*Gen.* 18: 18, 22: 18), I should come as the Redeemer into the world. In limbo, where he is with the rest of the just, he heard of my Incarnation and Birth, and rejoiced. Thus Christ gives the Jews to understand that he is truly the Messias whom God promised to Abraham, and whom he had awaited with a great desire.

8. The Jews, in their blindness, misconstrued these words also, and thought that he meant to say that Abraham saw him in this life two thousand years previously, and rejoiced at his appearance; therefore, full of indignation, they said: *Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?* Jesus said to them: *Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham was made, I am.* With these words Christ attests that he is God from all eternity. Although Abraham lived two thousand years before my Incarnation and coming into the world, I, nevertheless, have been before him, for I am the Son of God, I am truly God, and as God I have an eternal existence. This time the Jews understood what Christ said, but as they disbelieved in him they were enraged, and took up stones in order to stone him to death as a blasphemer, for blasphemy was to be punished by stoning.—*Lev.* 24: 16. But the hour of Christ's death was not yet come; the Jews therefore could not accomplish their wicked design; he hid himself by making himself invisible; went out of the temple, and visited it no more during the short time that he stayed in Jerusalem.

This is a short explanation of the gospel for to-day; let us now see what we have to learn from it.

PART II.

1. *Who can convince me of sin?* Thus Christ spoke; first, to show that he is more than man, that he is the Son of God and the promised Messias; and secondly, as a lesson for us, that he who teaches and corrects others must be irreproachable himself, otherwise people say, "Physician, cure thyself." Let us not be content with outward justice and probity, for this avails nothing, if we are not interiorly just. We are not justified before God unless our morals are in harmony with our faith.

2. *He that is of God heareth the words of God.* See here the mark of the children of God and of the children of the devil. He that hears and willingly receives the word which God announces to him by interior inspirations, by spiritual books, by priests

and superiors, has the mark of a child of God; but he that disdains the word of God, as the Israelites did the manna in the desert, who does not love to hear it, of him we must say that he has the mark of a child of the devil. Examine yourselves and see what profit you have derived from the hearing or reading of the word of God heretofore, and consider that, not the hearers, but the doers of the divine word will be justified.

3. The Jews insulted and blasphemed Christ most horribly, calling him a *Samaritan* and *a man who has a devil.* How does he conduct himself towards his blasphemers? Does he fly into a passion? Does he take revenge on them? No, he defends himself with the utmost calmness, saying merely: *I have not a devil.* When we are insulted and reviled, how do we behave? Do we not fly into a passion? Do we not become angry? Do we not retaliate and break out into insults? And who is Christ, and who are we? Oh! let us lay aside our sensitiveness; otherwise we can not be disciples of the meek Jesus. A look at him, insulted and blasphemed as he was, should stimulate our heart to meekness. "Oh! man, what ignominy can be inflicted upon you that Christ has not first endured?"—*St. Augustine.*

4. Our Lord complains of the Jews that they *dishonor* him by their blasphemies. Many Christians, too, make themselves guilty of this grievous sin, by cursing, swearing, and imprecations, and so often that with many it has become a habit. This cursing and blasphemy are mortal sins and frequently cause scandal, especially when children are present. Those that are subject to this bad habit must strive to give it up, and as often as a curse or a blasphemy escapes their lips they should say for a penance: "Blessed and praised be Jesus in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar." Beware, also, lest you dishonor Christ by unbecoming conduct in the church, and especially by an unworthy communion.

5. Christ assures us *that he does not seek his own glory,* but the glory of his heavenly Father. How differently-minded are we! We seek our own honor so much, that we scarcely do anything in which we have not, more or less, our own honor in view. Oh, what shame, confusion, and grief for us, when the divine Judge one day exposes us, takes from us the assumed honor, and restores it to God, to whom alone it is due. Oh, let us act always according to the maxim of St. Ignatius: "All for the greater glory of God." Let us not forget that it is our first and only vocation on earth to glorify God in all we do, and that our good works have value and merit before God only when they are done for his greater glory.

6. Instead of falling down before Jesus and adoring him, they took up stones in order to kill him. What was the cause of this shocking deed? Nothing else but pride. It was *pride* that blinded them; it was through pride that the clear arguments that Jesus gave as to his Godhead and his dignity as Messias did not open their eyes; it was *pride* that hardened them so that they resisted all heavenly graces; it was *pride* that made them irreconcilable enemies of our Lord and caused them to take up stones. Oh! let us beware of pride and ambition, lest we fall into blindness and obstinacy, and finally into everlasting perdition.

What did Christ do when they would stone him? *He hid himself and went out of the temple.* He was not compelled to do this; for what can human impotence do against divine omnipotence? But he did it to teach us, first, that God departs with his grace from those who disregard his salutary inspirations; and secondly, that we must go out of the way of angry persons, in order not to aggravate them, and to avoid still greater mischief.

PERORATION.

These are lessons which the gospel for this day contains; remember them, and regulate your life accordingly. We live in an age in which Jesus and his holy Church are greatly reviled, insulted, blasphemed, and persecuted; let us take care that we do not suffer any injury to our soul. Let us be steadfast in our faith and in our devotion to Holy Church, and lead a life worthy of our faith. Let Jesus be our model and type; let us follow him on the way of the cross, that we may be worthy to follow him into the glory of heaven. Amen.

PASSION SUNDAY.

3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

CONFESSION.

Which of you shall convince me of sin?—John 8: 46.

Christ could justly challenge the Jews in these words: *Which of you shall convince me of sin?* He that had come to take away the sins of the world was to be himself without sin, and no

shadow of an imperfection to obscure the splendor of his glory. Hence the Apostle says: "It was fitting that we should have such a high-priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens."—*Heb.* 7: 27.

How different is it with us! Although others may have nothing to condemn in us, we must confess to ourselves that from our infancy up to this moment we have sinned often and grievously in thought, word, and deed, and by the omission of many good works. Therefore St. John writes: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." At the same time the Apostle indicates a means which we must make use of to obtain the forgiveness of our sins: "If we confess our sins, he (God) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity."—*I. John* 1: 9. *Confession*, therefore, or the acknowledgment of our sins, is the means for the forgiveness of our sins, and on confession, the fourth part of the Sacrament of Penance, I shall speak to-day, answering the three following questions:

I. Why we must confess?
II. What must we confess?
III. How must we confess?

PART I.

That we should confess, that is, accuse ourselves of our sins before a priest in order to obtain from him absolution, is not *a human*, but *a divine ordinance*, as the Council of Trent emphatically teaches in these words: "If any one denies that sacramental confession was instituted by virtue of divine right, or is necessary to salvation, let him be anathema."—*Sess.* 14. *Cap.* 6. The divine institution of confession is evident—

1. *From the words of Christ:* "Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."—*John* 20: 23. With these words Christ constituted the Apostles and their successors in the priesthood spiritual judges; they were either to forgive sinners their sins, or to retain them. If a judge is to pass a sentence upon some one, he must know the circumstances of the case in detail; for without this knowledge he can neither condemn nor acquit. In like manner the confessor must know the state of the soul of the sinner, if he is to judge it. But as the sins, especially those of thought and desire, are entirely hidden, the confessor can not arrive at the knowledge of them unless the sinner reveals them, or in other words confesses them in detail. Moreover, the confessor must enjoin a penance on the sinner as satisfaction. This penance

must be as far as possible in due proportion to his sins, and must assist the sinner to amend. How would the confessor be able to enjoin on the sinner a penance corresponding to his sins if he had no knowledge of them? The power therefore of forgiving and retaining sin, which Christ gave to the Apostles and their lawful successors, evidently includes the duty of confessing sin.

2. *From the testimony of all the Fathers of the Church.* St. Cyprian, a bishop and martyr of the third century, severely reproaches those who during the persecution had sacrificed to idols for going to the table of the Lord without having first confessed their crime, so as to be reconciled with God, and for thus sinning more grievously against God than when they denied him. Then he exhorts all those who in any way have sinned in thought or deed to confess without delay. St. Ambrose of Milan says: "The poison is sin; the remedy, the accusation of one's crime; the poison is iniquity, confession is the remedy against relapse. And, therefore, it is truly a remedy against poison if thou declarest thine iniquities, that thou mayst be justified. Art thou ashamed? This shame will avail thee little at the judgment-seat of God." St. Augustine writes: "Let no one say to himself, I do penance to God in private, I do it before God. Is it, then, in vain that Christ hath said: "Whatsoever you shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven?" Is it in vain that the keys have been given to the Church? Do we make void the gospel? void the words of Christ?" St. Chrysostom says: "Lo! we have now at length reached the close of Lent; now especially we must press forward in the career of fasting . . . and make *a full and accurate confession of our sins* . . . . that with these good works having come to the day of Easter, we may enjoy the beauty of the Lord . . . For, as the enemy knows that having confessed our sins and shown our wounds to the physician we attain to a perfect cure, he in an especial manner opposes us." St. Basil: "We must confess our sins to those to whom has been committed the dispensation of the mysteries of God." In general the Fathers of the Church teach that the sinner who out of fear or shame omits to confess his sins, can no more be absolved from them than a sick man can expect to be cured if he is ashamed to explain his case to the physician.

3. *From the doctrine of the Greek schismatical Church.* This Church, which, under the leadership of Photius, separated from the Catholic Church and has since remained a distinct body, having no spiritual relation with us, teaches that private confession is an essential part of the Sacrament of Penance, and that without it there is no forgiveness of sins. The Greek schis-

matic Synod, held at Jerusalem in the year 1672, declares that "the Sacrament of Penance, *which includes private confession*, has been instituted by Christ when he said: 'Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven,'" etc.

4. *Lastly, from the fact that the custom of confessing one's sins has existed in the Church from the beginning.* It is impossible to mention a time when the custom of confessing one's sins did not exist in the Church, or when it was introduced by an ordinance of the Church. We read in the Acts that "many of them who believed came, confessing and declaring their deeds to the Apostles." Why did they confess their sins unless they were bound to do so? And they did not declare their good deeds, but their evil deeds, as is evident from the result of their confession, viz., burning the wicked books. St. Irenæus, a disciple of the Apostles, says that some women who had been seduced by a false teacher named Mark confessed not only their unchaste actions but also their impure desires. The Fathers of the Church already quoted prove the existence of confession in the following centuries. We possess several penitential works, or books of confession, which reach far back, in which is described most minutely how careful the confessors are to inquire about the number, the kind, and the circumstances of sins, and how the penitents are to accuse themselves of all even the most secret sins. Confession is as old as the Church, and is not a human, but a divine institution.

Part II.

We must confess—

1. *All mortal sins,* howsoever they may have been committed, in thought, word, deed, or by omission. The Council of Trent teaches this in these words: "Whereas all mortal sins, even those of thought, render men *children of wrath* and enemies of God, it is necessary to seek for the pardon of them all from God by an open and modest confession; . . . . they who act otherwise, and knowingly keep back certain sins, set nothing before the divine bounty to be forgiven through the priest."—*Sess.* 14, *Cap.* 5.

By mortal sins, which necessarily must be confessed, are to be understood those *which we remember after careful examination.* This, again, is the doctrine of the Council of Trent. He, therefore, who carefully examines his conscience, and does not discover one or the other mortal sin, or forgets to confess it, makes a valid confession; it is, however, his duty to confess the undiscovered sin at his next confession, after he has come to the knowledge of it.

Venial sins may be kept back in confession without guilt, but it is useful and salutary to confess them, partly in order to obtain the remission of them, and partly to afford the confessor a better knowledge of the state of our soul. If we were in doubt whether the sin be mortal or venial, for the sake of greater security it must be confessed, unless the confessor judges the contrary better, on account of the scrupulosity of the penitent, who sees mortal sin everywhere, though there is none.

2. *The number of mortal sins,* i. e., we must say how often we have committed each of them. This is evident from the fact that no mortal sin must be kept back. If, notwithstanding a diligent examination of conscience, we can not exactly remember the number of sins, it suffices to give it as nearly as we can. In regard to impure words we must give the number of persons in whose presence they were spoken, because this circumstance multiplies the sin.

3. *The circumstances of a sin.*

(*a.*) The circumstances which change the nature of the sin, that is, which cause one sin to become of quite another kind, and therefore to be called by another name, must be explained. Examples: Theft and sacrilege, fornication and adultery, incest and bestiality. "Those circumstances which change the species of the sin are necessarily to be explained in confession, because, without them, the sins themselves are neither entirely set forth by the penitents, nor are they known clearly to the judges, and it can not be that they can estimate rightly the grievousness of the crimes, and impose on the penitents the punishment which ought to be inflicted on account of them."—*Council of Trent, Sess.* 4. *Cap.* 5.

(*b.*) *The circumstances which make a venial sin mortal.* This is self-evident. We must confess all mortal sins, and since in a particular instance a venial sin, on account of some circumstance connected with it, has become a mortal sin, it must be confessed.

(*c.*) *The circumstances which do not change the nature of the sin, but considerably aggravate it.* The Council of Trent does not command us to mention these circumstances in confession, but it is highly commendable to do so. The first reason is because many penitents do not know exactly what circumstances aggravate the sin or change the nature of it. Now, if a circumstance were such as would change the nature of the sin, and we were not to mention it, we should expose ourselves to the danger of making an invalid confession. The second reason is because the con-

fessor is better enabled to form an opinion as to the state of the soul of the penitent and to prescribe for him more suitable means for preventing a relapse.

It is to be remembered that in explaining the circumstances we must not mention any person's name; we must say nothing superfluous and express ourselves as decently as possible.

PART III.

We must confess—

1. *Sincerely*, that is, we must accuse ourselves exactly in accordance with the knowledge of our guilt before God, without concealing or disguising anything, or excusing it by vain *pretexts*. The priest in the confessional is the representative of God; any insincerity and disguise resorted to in the confessional is an attempt to deceive not the priest but God himself, who detests nothing so much as a lie. A penitent who for any reason whatever conceals a mortal sin in confession, or so extenuates it that it appears only as a venial sin, or does not mention a circumstance which changes the species of the sin, or diminishes the number of mortal sins, makes an invalid and sacrilegious confession. In order to conceal nothing that must necessarily be confessed, consider—

(*a.*) *That sincerity in confession is absolutely necessary in order to obtain the forgiveness of sins.* Pray as much as you please, perform austerities, give your whole substance to the poor, live like a saint, all is in vain; so long as you conceal one mortal sin in confession all your confessions and communions are sacrilegious, and if you die in that state you will surely be lost for ever.

(*b.*) *That it is better to confess your sins to a priest, who is bound to eternal secrecy and silence, than to live miserably in sin, to die unhappily, and to be put to shame before the whole world on the last day.* St. Boniface, the Apostle of Germany, says in a sermon: "If we conceal our sins, God will reveal them. It is much better to confess our sins to one man than in that terrible judgment to be accused and humiliated before heaven, earth, and hell, not for our amendment but for our eternal punishment."

2. *Clearly.* We must so express ourselves that the confessor can readily understand everything, and clearly see the state of our conscience.

(*a.*) We must speak neither too softly nor too quickly, but in such a way that the confessor can understand every word. If we

should purposely speak softly or quickly so that the confessor may not understand or hear certain sins, we should expose ourselves to the danger of making a sacrilegious confession.

(*b.*) We must confess every sin definitely, and add whatever is necessary for a knowledge of its nature. Such accusations as, I have had bad thoughts, I have said something wrong, I have not loved God, I have sinned against the third, the sixth commandment, are too general and indefinite, because the priest could not form an opinion as to the kind of sins you committed in thought, word, and deed. We must distinctly name and specify the different sins.

PERORATION

In conclusion, I will tell you what you must do in the confessional. Kneel down, make the sign of the cross, and say the *Confiteor* as far as "through my most grievous fault." Mention when you were last at confession, unless the priest knows it already; then confess your sins. If at your last confession you were not absolved, or if you concealed a sin, or if you have a sacrilegious confession to repeat, tell the confessor this at the very beginning, that he may know how to act. In conclusion, make a short act of contrition, and ask for a penance and the priest's absolution. Then listen with attention to what the priest tells you, and if he asks you any questions, answer modestly and sincerely. Submit willingly and humbly to his judgment and resolve to follow his directions, so that you may obtain from God the forgiveness of your sins. Amen.

PASSION SUNDAY.

4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

THE CELEBRATION OF PASSION SUNDAY.

Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple.—*John* 8: 59.

This is called *Passion Sunday* because the Church from now till Easter Sunday occupies herself in a special manner with the consideration of the passion of Christ. If you cast a look at the altar, you see that the crucifix is veiled with a people cloth.

What is the meaning of this? The Church represents figuratively what the gospel of to-day relates of our divine Saviour. The Jews, in their rage, pressed forward with stones in their hands to stone him to death. *But Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple.* The Church calls to our mind this event; for that reason she withdraws the picture of Christ crucified from our eyes by veiling it. The cloth is purple, the color of penance, which signifies that Christ has put on the garment of penance in order to atone for our sins and to reconcile us with God, and that we also must do penance, that we may participate in the grace of redemption. This veiling of the picture of the Crucified also indicates the profound sorrow which the Church feels for the bitter passion of Jesus, her Bridegroom.

Let us, then, to-day make the passion of our Lord the subject-matter of our pious meditation, and for this end let us consider more closely the celebration of Passion Sunday, for in it the Church shows—

I. The greatness of the passion of Jesus
II. The fruits of the passion of Jesus.

PART I.

From the Garden of Olives, where he began his passion, to Mount Calvary, where he ended it on the cross, Christ endured unutterable tortures in body and soul. It is these, his *interior and exterior* sufferings, that the Church sets before our eyes to-day in the celebration of Passion Sunday.

1. The priest recites at every mass, unless it be a requiem, the psalm *Judica.* This is omitted from this Sunday till Holy Saturday, if the mass is of the day itself. The question then arises: Why is this psalm omitted? It is because the whole celebration of Passion-tide is nothing else than the realization of what the psalm *Judica* contains, therefore to-day it forms the Introit of the mass. Passion-tide mainly represents to us the passion and death of Christ and especially the sufferings and persecutions which he endured from his enemies; and as the psalm *Judica* refers to the sufferings and trials of King David, a type of Christ, the Church omits it and immediately turns our attention to our divine Saviour, admonishing us to consider the ignominy and death which he voluntarily took upon himself in his passion. Let us briefly consider this interior passion of Jesus.

In the Garden of Olives he said to his three disciples, Peter, James and John: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death."—*Mark* 14: 34. Shortly afterwards, whilst he prayed to his heavenly

Father, a bloody sweat broke forth from the pores of his sacred body. "And his sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground."—*Luke* 22: 44. What anguish, what oppression of the heart must it not have been to draw such a sweat from Christ! This was, however, only the beginning of the interior suffering which never abandoned him till he died on the cross. What sadness must not the treason of Judas and his unhappy end, the flight of all his disciples, and the threefold denial of Peter, have caused him! What must his Most Sacred Heart have felt when the robber and murderer Barabbas was preferred before him, and when he was derided and mocked on the cross! And who can comprehend the sorrow when he saw himself deprived of all divine consolation and cried out: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!—*Matt.* 27: 46.

The suffering of his soul, which certainly was as great, even greater than that of his body, you should make the subject of your pious meditations at this holy time, and you should unite with it salutary exercises, such as contrition for your sins, especially the sins of the heart, and patience and resignation to the will of God in the various tribulations of life. Beg of him, for the sake of his bitter anguish and abandonment, to assist you in your last struggle, to comfort and strengthen you, that you may persevere in faith, hope, and charity, and make a holy and happy end.

2. In the celebration of Passion Sunday the Church represents not only the interior but also the exterior sufferings of Christ. In the holy mass and in the divine office the doxology: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost," recurs very frequently. From this day till Easter it is omitted in the masses of the day; in the breviary it is also frequently, and in the last three days entirely, omitted. Why? On account of the abuse and contumely which Christ endured from Jews and Gentiles in his passion and death. He had scarcely delivered himself into the hands of his enemies, when he was treated more cruelly than the greatest malefactor. He was bound with ropes, buffeted, spit upon; and in the night of Holy Thursday, and Good Friday, he had not a moment's rest! But this ignominy and suffering was only a prelude to what was to follow. What did he not suffer at the dreadful scourging, where he was so bruised and wounded that the prophet says of him: "We have thought him, as it were, a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted."—*Is.* 53: 4. What did he not suffer at the crowning with thorns, and on his way to Calvary, when, his strength failing, in his agony he fell under the heavy weight of the cross! What did he not suffer at his crucifixion, when his hands and feet were pierced through with nails under the heavy strokes of the hammer, and during

the three hours that he hung on the cross, till he bowed down his adorable head and died!

These are the inexpressible sufferings which the Church calls to our mind during this Passion-tide. She sees her divine Founder and Bridegroom as the Man of Sorrows, humbled to the dust; therefore she chants no Gloria; sitting at the foot of the cross she can only mourn and weep. When St. Teresa one day beheld a crucifix covered with blood and wounds, she felt so great a sorrow for her sins that she thought she should die. She threw herself on her knees, and, with many tears, begged Jesus never to let her again commit a sin. From that hour she received greater graces, which enabled her to combat and overcome all evil inclinations. Let us also during this time frequently meditate on the passion and death of Christ; it will be an effectual means for us to love Jesus and to offend him no more.

PART II.

In the celebration of this Sunday the Church shows us also the fruits of the passion.

1. In the epistle of the mass (*Heb.* 8: 11-15), Christ appears as High-priest, who, in his person and sacrifice, infinitely transcends the high-priests and sacrifices of the Old Law. The high-priests of the Old Law were only men, being themselves unclean and sinful; Christ, our High-priest, is God and man, pure, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners. The sacrifices of the priests in the Old Law consisted of created things, mostly animals; they had no virtue to purify man interiorly and blot out his sins; but the sacrifice of Christ, which is himself, cleanses us from all stains of sin; it justifies and sanctifies us.

2. In the preface of the mass we also behold the fruits of the passion. It says: "It is truly meet and just, right and available to salvation, that we should always, and in all places, give thanks to thee, eternal God, who hast fastened the salvation of the human race on the wood of the cross, that from whence dead originated life might arise, that he who conquered by wood might be overcome by wood, through Christ our Lord." It was a tree that caused us all both corporal and spiritual death—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in Paradise. Again it is a tree that brings us new life and grace—and this is the tree of Golgotha, the Holy Cross. Adam by his disobedience plunged us into the greatest misery; Christ, the second and better Adam, by his obedience, has raised, not only himself, but us all, and restored us to the happy state of children of God and heirs of the kingdom of heaven; hence the Apostle says: "For as by the dis-

obedience of one man, many were made sinners; so also by the obedience of one, many shall be made just."—*Rom.* 5: 19. By means of the tree in Paradise the evil spirit seduced our first parents and made them and us his slaves; by means of the tree on Calvary Christ destroyed the power of the devil over mankind and set us free.

3. The Church also indicates the fruits of the passion of Christ by omitting in the breviary what is called the commemorations of the saints, that is, those prayers by which they are venerated and their intercession is invoked. She does not do this as if she thought it was not good and wholesome to venerate the saints and to invoke them at this time, but her object is to direct our attention exclusively to Christ, our only mediator and Saviour. But for him we should not be redeemed, there would be no saints whom we could venerate; the holiness and felicity of the elect and the power of their intercession are the fruits of the passion, and it is to his merits that the saints owe all they have and are. The stars disappear when the sun rises. Thus we do not commemorate the saints now because we have Christ, the Sun of Justice, the Author of sanctity, before our eyes.

PERORATION.

If heretofore you have been cold and indifferent towards your Saviour, begin at least now to love him with all your heart; for this end meditate on his passion; for nothing is able to warm your cold heart more than this wonderful mystery of love; perform the Stations of the Cross, and imprint deeply on your mind what Christ suffered and what graces he merited for you by his passion and death on the cross. Indeed, meditation on his passion will produce in you the most salutary effects; it will make you hate and detest sin as the only cause of his sufferings and death, and induce you to lead a life of penance. The boundless love of Jesus will inflame your heart with the love of him, and thus, with God's grace, you will work out your salvation and be saved. Amen.

PASSION SUNDAY.

5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

TWO STONES WHICH IN OUR TIME ARE CAST AT THE CHURCH.

They took up stones therefore to cast at him. — John 8 : 59.

Jesus, in the gospel of this day, *declares himself* to the Jews, as the promised Messias whom Abraham, their progenitor, had ardently expected, and whose Incarnation he had greeted in Limbo with the other just; and affirms that he is older than Abraham, that is, the Son of God from all eternity. But instead of falling down and adoring him, they take up stones to cast at him. Thus the Jews treated Christ, who, in his infinite love and mercy, had come to redeem and save them.

This ungrateful feeling of the blind and obstinate Jewish race is not yet extinct; it is still living, and not only among the Jews, but also among some Christians. They can no longer cast stones at Christ, because he is withdrawn from their eyes and sits at the right hand of God, but they cast stones at the Church established by him, in order to destroy her. Two stones especially are cast at the Church in our days, and they are these accusations:

I. The Catholic Church is dangerous to the State;
II. She is the enemy of progress.

Part I.

The Church is dangerous to the State. You can read this in newspapers, pamphlets and books, and hear it at public meetings and in the Houses of Legislature. Is it just to cast this stone at the Church? Let us examine the case a little more closely.

1. If the Church were dangerous to the state, she would be particulary hostile to rulers.

There are various forms of government. In most countries one person is at the head of the government and governs by right of succession as emperor, king, duke, etc. The power of the ruler is either limited or absolute. Some countries are republics, where one person does not exercise the power of government in consequence of his right of succession, but a president is elected by the people for a definite term of years. How does the Church

regard these forms of government? She places no impediment in the way of any, much less does she presume to designate the one or the other as unlawful, or teach that her children need not submit to them. Example: France, which for the last fifty years has had so many forms of government, and the Church has always recognized them.

The Church does not even consider whether the rulers are believers or unbelievers, orthodox or heterodox, good and pious, or the contrary; she teaches that her children owe obedience to every legitimate ruler, no matter what he is from a religious or moral point of view. Example: The first Christians, who never rebelled against the pagan authorities, as the Jews did against the Romans. And why does the Church submit to every existing government? Only and solely on account of God, for she is taught by divine revelation that every lawful authority is ordained by God, and that every rebellion against it is a rebellion against God. "Let every soul be subject to higher powers, for there is no power but from God, and those that are, are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist, purchase to themselves damnation." — *Rom.* 13: 1-2.

2. *But perhaps the Church infringes upon the rights of rulers and does not regard their ordinances and laws?* Neither does she do this. The rulers have, for instance, the right to enter into alliances with other nations, to make treaties, to declare war, to make peace; they have the power to establish institutions for the promotion of arts and sciences, and whatever is necessary for the common good, and to assess taxes. Does the Church hinder the government in doing these things? No. On the contrary, she obliges all her children to obedience, she coöperates with the temporal authority, and supports and sustains her ordinances to the best of her power. She teaches in particular that the temporal authority has the power from God to make laws, and that all subjects are bound to obey them. She teaches that Christians must submit themselves even to temporal laws, not from human respect, but for God's sake, and that he sins who violates them for the simple reason that the temporal authority is the representative of God. He that stands by the doctrine of the Catholic Church never allows himself to violate a law of the temporal authority, even if he had no evil consequences to fear, for he says to himself: I keep this law, not on account of men, but on account of God; my Church teaches me that I should sin, and must expect punishment from God, if I transgress it.

There is only one case in which the Catholic would be bound to refuse obedience to the temporal laws; that is, if by such laws something were commanded or forbidden that would be contrary

to the divine law, and consequently a sin. In this case obedience would be morally impossible, because one is never allowed to act contrary to the law of God, and so to commit a sin. Therefore St. Peter and the other Apostles said to the high Council which forbade them to preach the gospel: "We ought to obey God rather than men."—*Acts* 5: 29.

But even in this case a Catholic must confine himself to the refusal of obedience, for it is the express doctrine of the Church that subjects are in no case allowed to use force against the government in power and to rebel against it. They may seek the redress of their grievances in a lawful way, but if in this they do not obtain their end, nothing remains for them but to persevere in patience till it pleases God to come to their aid. The weapons of the Christians, says a Father of the Church, are tears and prayers.

The accusation therefore that the Church is dangerous to the state is a stone which is flung at the Church without reason, the very contrary being the truth. The Church is the best and most powerful support of the state, because she teaches that it has its origin and power from God, and urges all subjects to fulfil their duties towards it conscientiously.

PART II.

Another stone which in our time is frequently cast at the Church is the assertion that she is an *enemy of progress*. Is this assertion true? I answer, yes and no, according to the sense in which the word "progress" is taken.

1. There is a *good and true progress* which the Church approves and promotes. We see that in our time natural sciences and arts are progressing wonderfully, inventions are brought out, and things are done which are most creditable to the human intellect. Just look at our railroads, steamboats, telegraphs, machines for agriculture, factories and trades, the grand and majestic buildings—all this is indeed an advance which a hundred years ago nobody ever dreamt of.

Is the Church opposed to this progress? Who would dare to assert it? The Church has always approved all useful progress, and she approves it to-day, and not a few priests have taken part in this progress at all times, and they continue to take part in it. Was it not the Church that civilized the rude, untutored nations, that instructed them in agriculture, trades, and arts, and taught them to erect commodious houses, and to lead an orderly life, in cities, towns, and villages? Was it not the Church that established schools everywhere, and founded institutions of learn-

ing? And is it not the Church that supports the state in the education of the people, and especially of youth? The Church is in no way the adversary of progress; on the contrary, she sanctions and promotes it as much as she can.

2. But there is also a *false progress*, a progress which seeks to triumph in our day, and which, if it should obtain full sway, would everywhere be fraught with mischief and ruin.

(*a.*) This progess denies the existence of God, says that the world originated from itself, that man is descended from an ape; or it makes him originate from the foam of the sea, as birds from the yolk of an egg; this progess denies that man has an immortal soul, that there is a heaven or a hell; in short, it subverts all that Christians, Jews, and even Gentiles, have believed and still believe. According to this progress there is no moral law, no difference between virtue and vice. It is therefore one and the same thing whether I give alms or steal, whether I love or hate, whether I save a man's life or take it away. This progress, especially in large cities, has many adherents, and is acquiring strength in the country. The fruits of it are a diabolical hatred of everything Christian, especially the Catholic Church; crimes and vices, than which there could have been none more terrible in the days of Noe; a total neglect of all Christian duties; numberless suicides; and then there is the awful fact that many have sworn to die without the priest, and without the sacraments, and to be buried like pagans.

(*b.*) There is another *progress* which does not go so far. It admits belief in God, in the immortality of the soul, in rewards and punishments in the next world, but it rejects the divine revelation entirely and asserts that we must not believe anything unless our reason can comprehend it. But with the aid of our reason only we can know but little of God and supernatural things, and that little imperfectly. Without divine revelation we know nothing of all the mysteries of our holy religion, the most holy Trinity, the Incarnation of Christ, the work of our redemption, the sacrifice of the mass, and the sacraments. Hence it is evident that if we take reason as the only rule of faith, we must reject all Christianity.

It is evident that the Church cannot sanction such *progress* as this and that she must resist and condemn it, using all the means she has available for the purpose, else she would not fulfil the commission of her divine Founder to instruct all nations, teaching them to observe all things which are necessary for salvation. Infidels and free-thinkers may make these charges against the Catholic Church, and try to persuade the world that she is the

enemy of all progress and must be rooted out, but the Church will always raise her voice, warn the nations against this pernicious progress, tear the mask from its face and show it in all its wickedness.

PERORATION.

You now know the two stones which are unjustly cast in our days at the Church: *that the Church is dangerous to the state*, though she is not; *that she is the enemy of progress*, though she is not, if real progress be meant. On the contrary, the Church is a pillar and support of the state, because she declares the ruler to be the representative of God, and exhorts all subjects to submit in accordance with their duty to the existing government and to keep its laws for the sake of God. She sanctions all progress that is good, and condemns only that which destroys Christian faith, and renders man miserable for time and eternity. The Church is a good and affectionate mother, who wills only what is best for us. Let us be good, obedient children, let us conscientiously fulfil our duties as subjects of the state and endeavor to make progress, not only in temporal things, but especially in the business of our salvation, according to the words of the apostle: "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." — *II. Pet.* 3: 18. Amen.

PASSION SUNDAY.

6. MORAL SKETCH.

GOD ABANDONS THE INCORRIGIBLE SINNER.

Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple. — John 8: 59.

The Jews took up stones to cast at Jesus, in order to kill him. But he hid himself, and went out of the temple. The Jews were angry because they could not stone him to death, but afterwards they comforted themselves with the thought that although they could not kill him, they had at least driven him off, and he would certainly come no more into the temple to preach his doctrine so odious to them. Oh, what blindness! What is to them the greatest evil is desirable; they rejoice that by stoning him they

have compelled him to abandon them, whilst they should weep and mourn because he has abandoned them. This is the punishment of those unhappy ones who despise all graces of heaven and obstinately persevere in sin. God abandons them.

Let us meditate to-day on this serious truth. God abandons the incorrigible sinner, and this is—

I. A terrible,
II. A just,
III. A universal punishment.

PART I.

God abandons the incorrigible sinner and this is a terrible punishment, for such a one—

1. *Will not be converted, although he might be.* **Proof:**

(*a.*) *The Jews.* Christ was still with them, although he went no more into their temple. He soon came into their city again, performed miracles anew, healing a blind man; he instructed them again, and endeavored to convince them of his Divinity and of his dignity as the Messias. When he was hanging on the cross they still had an opportunity of being converted like the penitent thief, the centurion, and others. Moreover, they had still forty years for their repentance. During that time the Resurrection of Jesus occurred, which was known in all Jerusalem and could not be denied; the descent of the Holy Ghost, which was accompanied by great signs and miracles, the preaching and propagation of the gospel in the whole Roman Empire, and the countless miracles which the Apostles and their successors performed. Who can think it possible that the Jews would have persevered in their unbelief? And yet they did so; only a comparatively small number of them embraced the Christian faith; the great bulk remained obstinate till the punishments of God overtook them.

(*b.*) *Careless Christians.* Conversion is much easier for them than it was formerly for the Jews. As members of the Catholic Church they are in the possession of all the means of grace by which they can be purified and sanctified. They have the word of God, the holy sacrifice of the mass, the holy sacraments; moreover, God seeks to win them by the voice of their conscience, by the admonitions of friends, by the good example of pious persons, by prosperity and adversity. I leave it to yourselves to judge whether conversion is not easy for a Christian. But is he converted? No, it is too often the case that he rejects the

means of salvation, or abuses them by continuing to offend God. Among us there are also many incorrigible sinners. No matter what God does for them they are not converted. Nay, instead of being converted they—

2. *Become only more obstinate, and therefore more culpable.* We see this again —

(*a.*) *In the Jews.* The longer Christ remained among them, the more pains he took to convert them; but the more miracles he wrought, the more hostile they became towards him. They misinterpreted his words, contradicted him, calumniated and blasphemed him, and sought his life. They did this, not from ignorance, but from malice; they knew and admitted that he wrought miracles; they said: "What do we, for this man doth many miracles?" — *John* 11: 47. Finally they decreed his death, delivered him to Pontius Pitate, the Roman governor, and ceased not till he was condemned to die on the cross. What obstinacy! We need not wonder that Christ said: "Woe to thee, Corozain, woe to thee, Bethsaida: for if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in you, they had long ago done penance in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, in the day of judgment, than for you."— *Matt.* 11: 21, 22.

(*b.*) *In Christians.* Many of them resemble bricks, which, when they are taken out of the kiln, are not yet particularly hard, but become the harder the longer they are exposed to the sun. First, when they fall into a mortal sin their conscience is aroused; a sermon, a kind admonition, frequently makes an impression upon them; they are uneasy and desire to get rid of the sin. But the longer they persevere in evil and the oftener they relapse, the more careless they become; till finally they go so far that they hate virtue and find pleasure only in what is evil. If any one rebukes them and tries to put a stop to their sinful career, they become his enemy, insult and calumniate him, and if it were in their power they would treat him no better than the Jews treated Christ. This is especially true of those who fall away from the Church and worship the so-called liberalism. It is evident that such become daily more culpable. What Christ said of his betrayer applies to them: "It were better for him if that man had not been born."—*Matt.* 26: 24.

Part II.

God abandons the incorrigible sinner; it is a just punishment We shall understand this—

1. *When we consider how God might treat the incorrigible sinner, and how he treats him in reality.*

(*a.*) If a father has a degenerate son who by his bad conduct causes him nothing but shame and bitterness of life, no one can blame him if he renounces him as his son and disinherits him. And we accuse God of injustice when he withdraws his hand and abandons those who never cease to offend and outrage him by their sins and vices!

(*b.*) God might abandon the sinner immediately after the first sin, as he abandoned the rebellious angels the moment they sinned, and cast them into hell. But, generally speaking, he does not so treat men. They sin, not only once, but ten, twenty, a hundred, or a thousand times, and oftener; they pile up sins mountains high, and God has patience with them, and waits many years for their conversion. Now if God, after a long series of years, turns away from the sinner, and abandons him, who can call it unjust? Where is the man who would be as indulgent with those who offend him as God is with sinners who frequently offend him grievously every day?

(*c.*) Moreover, God does not abandon even the greatest sinner in such a manner that he withdraws all graces from him. For as God's grace is absolutely necessary for conversion, it would, if God refused him all grace, be impossible for him to be converted and to save his soul; but, whereas God wills all men to be saved, even the greatest sinners, it follows that he also gives them sufficient graces. These sufficient graces avail nothing in the case of men who are hardened in evil; they are not converted, and therefore they perish; but that is their own fault, for no one, and least of all a great sinner, can demand that God should give him extraordinary graces and work miracles to save him from perdition.

2. *If we consider the conduct of the sinner towards God's grace.* If you hear of a poor abandoned sick man, you go, full of compassion, to help him; you give him food, as he is almost starved, but he refuses your food; you send a physician to him, but he also repulses him and his medicine; you offer him your services, but he drives you from his couch. Now I ask: What will you do? You will abandon him without reproaching yourselves for having acted uncharitably towards him, for he rejects your help. Now, just in this manner, and still more shamefully does the incorrigible sinner act towards God, who offers him numerous graces for his salvation, but he rejects them, and not only once, but a hundred times, and oftener. Does God do him any wrong

if he punishes him by abandoning him? "We would have cured Babylon, but she is not healed; let us forsake her." — *Jer.* 51: 9.

Let us suppose another case. In your charity you assist a poor man, you give him clothes to cover his nakedness; you give him money to buy bread and other necessary articles. But what use does he do with your alms? He sells for a trifle the clothes you gave him, and buys intoxicating drink with the money which you gave him for bread. Instead of thanking you, he calumniates and insults you, and even threatens to kill you. I ask again shall you continue to support such a wretch? Certainly not. Full of indignation you will withdraw your hand from him and say: He shall never get a cent from me; I should consider it a sin to give him anything, because he abuses my benefits and acts so ungratefully. Now, many sinners act thus. They abuse the graces which God gives them for their salvation. They hear the word of God merely to laugh at it, or to criticise the speaker. They go to confession and communion—perhaps once a year, at Easter, but without a resolution to change their sinful life, and thereby they commit a double sacrilege. Sundays and holidays they spend in the service of the devil, in sins and vices of every sort, and thus they live for years. Now judge for yourselves: Does God act unjustly when he forsakes such sinners and delivers them to the perdition which they have deserved a thousand times? Oh, surely if the good and merciful God forsakes the incorrigible sinner it is nothing else than a just punishment, as every condemned soul must confess on the day of judgment: "Thou art just, O Lord, and thy judgment is right." — *Ps.* 118: 137.

PART III.

God abandons the incorrigible sinner, and this is a universal punishment. This is shown—

1. *In the case of individuals.* Thus David says of an incorrigible sinner, among other things: "He loved cursing, and it shall come unto him, and he would not have blessing, and it shall be far from him. And he put on cursing like a garment; and it went in like water into his entrails, and like oil in his bones."—*Ps.* 108: 18. Examples: Cain. God admonished him to control his passion, and to lay aside his hatred of Abel, but in vain. Cain carried out his design and slew his brother. What was the result of this crime? God pronounced his curse upon him, and it came upon him temporally and eternally. Judas the traitor. With what love did Jesus treat this Apostle, how much he labored to turn him from his wicked purpose; he washed his feet, warned him repeatedly, represented to him the greatness of his sin, said to him at the very moment when he betrayed him: "Friend,

whereto art thou come? — *Matt.* 26: 50. But when everything failed to induce him to change his mind, Christ left him to his fate. What was his end? He despaired of pardon and hanged himself. A dissipated young man in Lancaster, England, who disregarded all wholesome admonitions, once saw in a dream his father who had died some time before, and who now with serious words commanded him to change his wicked life. But the debauchee continued in his evil ways. He had the same dream again, but this time his father told him that St. Martin's day was the day appointed for his death and judgment. The youth related his dream to his boon companions and ridiculed it. St. Martin's day, till far into the night, he spent in debauchery and drink. When he awoke late in the morning from his carousal he jested about the dream, but turned pale and was suddenly struck with apoplexy, which at once ended his life. If the unfortunate young man had looked in an almanac, he would have found that this was also St. Martin's day, as the feast of St. Martin the Bishop follows immediately after that of St. Martin, Pope and Martyr. This is the end of every incorrigible sinner. God abandons him and he is lost.

2. *In entire families and races.* "The offspring of the ungodly shall not bring forth many branches, and make a noise as unclean roots upon the top of a rock."—*Ecclus.* 40: 15. Example: Achab, who, at the instance of his impious wife Jezabel, caused Naboth to be stoned to death, in order to take possession of his vineyard. The prophet Elias went and announced to him that he should perish with his whole family. And so it came to pass. Achab was mortally wounded and died in his chariot, and the dogs licked up his blood.—*III. Kings.* 22: 38. Jezabel by the orders of Jehu was thrown headlong out of a window, and the hoofs of the horses trod upon her, and her flesh was eaten by dogs.—*IV. Kings* 9. Jehu also commanded the seventy sons of Achab to be killed, as well as all those that were left of the house of Achab in Jezrahel, and all the great ones and all his acquaintances and all his prieste, till not one of them was left.—*IV. Kings,* 10. We see to-day how many a family in which there is no religion or fear of God, nothing but wickedness, injustice, sin and vice, decays and finally dies out.

3. *In entire kingdoms.* Josue, the leader of the Israelites, conquered thirty-one kings, broke up their kingdoms, and destroyed their inhabitants.—*Jos.* 11, 12. Afterwards, under the judges and the kings of the Israelites, the adjoining kingdoms were invaded and many of them destroyed. The cause of their downfall was their wickedness. Their measure of sin was full; therefore they were rejected by God. In the history of the ancient

world we read accounts of the great and powerful kingdoms of the Assyrians, Medes, Persians, Greeks, and Romans; but all these kingdoms, which seemed to be founded for eternity, perished, and on their ruins others arose. All these kingdoms of the ancient world degenerated in the course of time and sunk into a pool of vices, and this was the reason why they were forsaken by God, and perished. The word of the prophet was verified: "O Lord, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be confounded; they that depart from thee shall be written in the earth because they have forsaken the Lord, the vein of living waters." —*Jer.* 17: 13. An eloquent proof as to how God rejects whole nations if they reject him we have in the Jewish people who for eighteen hundred years have been deprived of their country, are scattered over the whole earth, and live without a temple and altar, without prophets and kings, without truth and repentance.

4. *In whole Continents.* Christ sent his Apostles into all parts of the world, the gospel was preached everywhere, and the nations congregated round the banner of the cross, from the rising to the setting of the sun. How gloriously did Christianity flourish in Asia and Africa! How many theologians and saints had the Church in those countries! And now those two continents for the greater part are sunk in the darkness of paganism and heresy, and not only in single provinces, but in whole countries the Christian religion is extinguished. And what is the aspect of Europe? Has the holy Catholic Church not lost millions of her children, partly by the Greek schism in the ninth, and partly by the great defection in the sixteenth century? Even in our days has not hell sent its emissaries over all Europe in order to root up Christianity, and to build up a Babel of unbelief and vice? Unless the nations of Europe give up their worldly-mindedness, and become more zealous in the affair of salvation, it is to be feared that God will forsake them, and that they will entirely lose the grace of faith.

PERORATION.

Thus you see that if man continues his wicked career and is not amended by admonitions and benefits, by corrections and punishments, God forsakes him and delivers him to perdition. It is a *terrible,* a *just,* and a *universal punishment.* A *terrible punishment;* for although the sinner whom God has forsaken might yet be converted, he is not; he sinks deeper and deeper into vice, and heaps the anger of God more and more upon his execrable head. It is a *just punishment,* for such a sinner deserves,

on account of his continued impenitence and the oft-repeated abuse of God's grace, nothing else than that God should forsake him. A *universal punishment,* which God has inflicted, and still inflicts, on individual persons, families, races, and entire kingdoms and continents. Let us ponder these serious truths and beware of arousing the wrath of God and, as it were, compelling him to forsake us. If we have sinned, let us do true penance without delay, and let us employ the holy season of Lent for our reconciliation with God, that it may become to us a time of salvation. Amen.

PASSION SUNDAY.

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7. MORAL SKETCH.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS.

They took up stones therefore to cast at him.—John 8: 59.

This Sunday is called in the language of the Church, "Judica Sunday" or "Passion Sunday." It is called "Judica Sunday" because the Introit of the mass begins with the word "Judica," which is the first word of a psalm of David relating to the passion of Christ. The Church, in using this psalm, or rather two verses of it, as the Introit of this Sunday's mass, indicates that at this holy time particularly we should lovingly contemplate the passion and death of Christ. Of this we are manifestly reminded by the other name which this Sunday has, viz., Passion Sunday. The gospel of to-day also directs our attention to the passion of our Lord, for what it relates occurred shortly before his death. The leaders of the Jews had already decreed that Jesus should die; they only watched for a favorable opportunity of executing their design. This was the reason why he hid himself, the time when he should suffer and die not yet having come.

During the last two weeks of Lent you should meditate on the passion and death of Jesus with greater fervor than ever. For this the devotion of the Way of the Cross is especially suitable, and I intend to speak of it to-day. I shall show you that the holy Way of the Cross is,

I. A very venerable, and
II. A very useful devotion.

PART I.

The Way of the Cross is a very venerable devotion—

1. *On account of its origin.* From whom does this devotion emanate? From Jesus Christ, who first traversed the Way of the Cross. Having been condemned to death by Pilate, a cross was laid on his shoulders, which he carried to Calvary, to accomplish thereon the work of our redemption. The distance from the palace of Pilate, where he began the Way of the Cross, to the place where he was crucified, was about 900 yards, a little over half a mile. This was a painful way for our dear Saviour, who on account of the sufferings which he had already endured, especially during his inhuman scourging, was prostrated and exhausted; every step he took onward required the greatest exertion and caused him the most excruciating pains, his whole body being covered with wounds.

The Way of the Cross is so called because it represents the way traversed by Christ. As often as we perform the devotion of the Way of the Cross we call to our mind Christ, who, loaded with the cross, went to Mount Calvary to die for us poor sinners, and by his death on the cross to redeem us from eternal death. We also think of his words: "If any man will follow me, let him deny himmself, and take up his cross, and follow me."—*Mark* 8: 34. As we read in the gospel, Mary, his mother, John, his beloved disciple, Mary Magdalen and several other pious women, accompanied him on the Way of the Cross. And in the life of the Blessed Virgin we read that after the Ascension of her divine Son into heaven, she often went over the same road contemplating with the deepest emotion the sufferings he had endured. We certainly do well if we follow, with Mary and other holy souls, our divine Saviour on his painful journey to Calvary, and diligently perform the devotion of the Way of the Cross.

2. *On account of its extension.* Even in the earlist times pious Christians from all countries journeyed to Jerusalem, there to visit the holy places, and especially to retrace the way on which Christ, laden with the cross, went to death for us. Later on, pictures of the stations were erected along the Way of the Cross, at a distance of thirty, fifty, a hundred or more steps, at which the people stopped for some time and devoutly contemplated the mystery represented by the picture. When, at a later period, the Saracens conquered the Holy Land, and the visit to the holy places was rendered impossible, pictures of the stations were also erected in other places, in order to give the faithful an opportunity of making the Way of the Cross. The first who did this were the Franciscans. Gradually this custom spread

far and wide, and to-day there is scarcely a church in which you will not find the Stations of the Cross. Five Popes, Innocent XII., Benedict XIII., Clement XII., Benedict XIV., and Clement XIV., have not only sanctioned, but also very earnestly recommended the devotion of the Way of the Cross to the faithful.

PART II.

The Way of the Cross is a very *useful* devotion,

1. For even in the beginning many found their salvation in it.

(*a.*) *Simon of Cyrene*, who assisted our faint and exhausted Saviour to carry the cross. He was a peasant, who had settled near Jerusalem. Our Lord rewarded him with the gift of faith for this act of charity. His two sons, also, Alexander and Rufus, became Christians, and according to reliable accounts, Rufus died as bishop of Tortosa in Spain, and Alexander as a martyr in Rome.

(*b.*) The pious woman, *Veronica*. There can be no doubt that our Lord repaid the love with which in compassion she wiped his disfigured countenance, not only by imprinting his countenance on her veil, but also by calling her to the true faith and to eternal salvation.

(*c.*) *The good thief on the cross, called Dismas.* Scarcely had he prayed, full of compunction, faith and humility: "Lord, remember me, when thou shalt come into thy kingdom," when he heard from the mouth of Jesus the consoling words: "Amen I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise."—*Luke* 23: 43.

(*d.*) The *centurion*, who was in command of the soldiers when Christ was led from Jerusalem to Calvary. Seeing the earthquake and other miracles at the crucifixion of Christ, he was filled with a holy fear and exclaimed: "Indeed this was the Son of God."—*Matt.* 27: 54.

(*e.*) *The people who were witnesses of the crucifixion.* "And all the multitude of them that were come together to that sight, and saw the things that were done, returned striking their breasts."—*Luke* 23: 48. This striking of their breasts was undoubtedly a sign of a believing heart and sincere contrition, and shortly after, at the sermon of St. Peter on the feast of Pentecost, it caused several thousands to become converts.

(*f.*) Finally, the *two pious councillors, Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus*, who took the sacred body of Jesus from the cross,

and laid it in the sepulchre. This work of charity was certainly rewarded here and hereafter.

2. *On the way of the cross, that is, by the devotion of the Way of the Cross, venerating our suffering and dying Saviour, we also can obtain our salvation.* What do we do when we perform the Way of the Cross? We contemplate the passion and death of Christ; we are sorry for our sins, which were the cause of his suffering and death, we thank him for his infinite love and mercy in shedding his blood for us, we ask for grace and pardon, and we promise him repentance and amendment. These exercises which we perform when we contemplate the passion and death of Jesus are very wholesome—

(*a.*) *For sinners.* How can the sinner not be moved to repentance when he considers the justice of God manifested through Christ, the innocent one, the infinitely holy and incarnate Son of God, who, having once taken upon himself the sins of the world, for the expiation of them was obliged to suffer so much and die so ignominious and painful a death; and when he considers the boundless love with which Christ suffered and died for the redemption of sinful man? For this reason the Fathers of the Church and all spiritual writers say that nothing spurs us on so powerfully to repentance and conversion as meditation on the passion of Christ. St. Bonaventure says: "Nothing is more salutary than every day to meditate on the excess of the pains which Christ suffered for the love of us. The wounds of Christ move even the hardest and inflame the coldest hearts." Hippolitus Galleatinus, a pious priest of Florence, had a picture which represented the head of Christ crowned with thorns. He stood before it many an hour during the day, and with profound devotion contemplated the infinite love of Jesus towards us. On the opposite side of the street lived a vain daugter of the world who was scandalized because she thought the priest was looking at himself so often in a mirror, and she maliciously hinted to him that she would like to see the mirror. The priest at once went for the picture and brought it to her house. But when she beheld the image of our Redeemer, the crown of thorns on his head, the tears in his eyes, the livid lips, and his countenance covered with, spittle, sweat and blood—in so pitiable a plight that he no longer resembled a man—she was deeply moved. But the priest said: "You have the mirror you desired, look at yourself therein daily. If it makes no impression upon you and does not move you to repentance, you will be lost. Contemplating this countenance, consider how much your Saviour suffered for your pride and vanity. Behold here with your own eyes him to whom one day you must give an account of all the souls whom you

have scandalized and allured." The sight of the picture, and the serious words of the priest, made so deep an impression upon this worldly-minded woman that she began bitterly to bewail her sins, threw herself at the feet of the priest and begged his pardon. She afterwards retired into a convent and led a penitential life. Oh, if all frivolous worldlings and sinners would frequently meditate on the passion and death of Christ, they would surely renounce their worldly, sinful life and be thoroughly converted.

(*b.*) *For the just.* Meditating on the passion of Christ we see what a terrible evil sin is, and we are led to detest it above all things; we are moved by the love with which Christ suffered and died for us, and we promise to love him, to be faithful to him and to imitate him. We see the most perfect model of all virtues, and are inspired to practice these virtues. With justice therefore, St. Bonaventure says: "If you, O man, wish to ascend from virtue to virtue, and lead a perfect life, meditate daily on the passion of Christ, since nothing else urges the soul so powerfully to sanctity. A certain young lady of noble extraction, once upon a time wished to enter a very austere Order. To try her vocation, the superior gave her a terrible description of the severity of the religious life, conducted her in spirit into all the apartments of the community, and described to her only those things which must appear terribly unpleasant to lay people. The younglady seemed overawed and spoke not a word. "My daughter," said the superior, "why do you not answer me?" To which the young lady replied in an animated manner: "I have only one question to ask: are there any crucifixes in the convent? Shall I find a crucifix in that cell, which is so narrow, where I must sleep on hard wood—in that refectory, where the food is so coarse—in that chapter-room, where one receives such severe reprimands?" "Yes, my daughter," answered the superior, "in all these apartments there are crucifixes." Then the young lady said: "Oh, my Mother! where I find a crucifix I hope to find nothing difficult." This is a great truth; the contemplation of Jesus crucified overcomes everything and renders the most difficult thing tolerable, nay, easy. He who devoutly contemplates the passion and death of Jesus is encouraged and receives strength to follow Christ in every situation of life, so that he can say with the Apostle: "Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword?" — *Rom.* 8: 35.

PERORATION.

Yes; the contemplation of the passion and death of Jesus is a very useful devotion for every one, for the sinner as well as for the just man. I exhort you, therefore, to esteem and practice diligently the devotion of the Way of the Cross, in which the passion and death of Jesus Christ are vividly brought before our eyes. Many and great indulgences are attached to this devotion. Popes Clement XII. and Benedict XIV. declared, "That every one who is solicitous to contemplate the passion of our Lord by means of this admirable devotion obtains all the indulgences he would gain by a personal visit to the Stations at Jerusalem." This is another reason for the practice of the devotion of the Way of the Cross. Be not content then with performing this devotion in Lent only, but perform it also at other times of the year, at home and in the church, just as it best suits you. But endeavor to perform it always with great interior recollection, with compunction of heart and pious sentiments, that you may gain the spiritual graces and blessings attached to it. Amen.



PALM SUNDAY.

EPISTLE. *Phil.* 2: 5—11. Brethren: Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery himself to be equal with God: but abased himself, taking the form of a servant, being made to the likeness of men, and in shape found as a man. He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above every name: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father.

1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

THE HUMILIATION AND EXALTATION OF CHRIST.

St. Paul once had a vision in the night. A man of Macedonia, standing and beseeching him, said: "Pass over into Macedonia and help us." After this vision St. Paul went to Macedonia, with Luke and Silvanus, being assured that God had called him to preach the gospel in that country. His labor was blessed; a congregation was soon formed at Philippi, an important city in Macedonia. St. Paul knew how to win their hearts, so that all clung to him with tender affection and gave him large alms. Hearing afterwards of his captivity, they sent him a zealous Christian named Epaphroditus, with alms. He brought the Apostle tidings of the flourishing condition of the Christian congregation at Philippi, which gave him great consolation. When Epaphroditus returned, Paul handed him a letter to the Philippians, in which he admonishes them to humility and concord, and warns them, with the affection of a father, against false teachers, who soon after arose among them and caused disturbances.

We shall consider the lesson of to-day, which is a small portion of this epistle. It treats—

I. Of the humiliation of Christ;
II. Of his exaltation.

Part I.

Concering the humiliation of Christ, the Apostle writes: *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery himself to be equal to God, but abased himself, taking the form of a servant, being made to the likeness of men, and in shape found as a man. He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.* I will first explain these words of the Apostle, and then draw some salutary lessons from them.

1. *Explanation.*

(*a.*) The Apostle says that Christ, when he was in the form of God, thought is not robbery himself to be equal to God. Christ was *in the form of God*, that is, as St. Paul elsewhere says, he was the splendor of the glory of the Father and the figure of his substance.—*Heb.* 1: 3. He was, according to his divine nature, of the same substance with the Father, truly God, and therefore in possession of all the divine perfections. By his declaration that he and the Father are one, that the same honor is due to him as to the Father, in a word, that he is truly God, he did not arrogate to himself something which was not due to him, as robbers do who unjustly appropriate to themselves the goods of others. Jesus, being truly God, could call himself God, and claim divine honor for himself, without infringing on the Godhead of the Father and the Holy Ghost. The Word remained God after he became man. He became man, but did not on that account cease to be God; he only united his humanity, that is, his soul and body, indissolubly with the Divinity. He was, therefore, whilst he sojourned on earth, suffered and died, the Son of God, true God, as he was before his Incarnation and from all eternity.

(*b.*) The Apostle says that Christ abased himself, assumed the form of a servant, being made to the likeness of men, and in shape found as a man. Christ is and remains God, but he *abased himself*, that is, he laid aside all the splendor of his Godhead, and made himself, who possessed all, as one who possesses nothing. *He took the form of a servant.* He could as man have come upon earth in worldly splendor and opulence; he could have surrounded himself with prerogatives; he could have enjoyed all the pleasures of life, but he refused to do so; he voluntarily chose a poor, humble state of life, the condition of a servant: as he himself

says, he came, not to be ministered to, but to minister. He would take upon himself all the infirmities and frailties of men, sin alone excepted; he would assume a body subject to hunger and thirst, fatigue and pain, and which could suffer and die, like the bodies of other men; he would assume a soul which was capable of interior sufferings, such as fear, anguish, sadness, like the souls of other men. Thus did Christ, for the love of us, abase himself.

(*c.*) Finally, the Apostle says that Jesus humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. *Jesus humbled himself.* This means that his humiliation was an entirely voluntary act. No one would have compelled or could compel him to become man, to live upon earth in such poverty and lowliness, to endure so many sufferings and tribulations; he did this of his own free will; his love and mercy for us were the cause of his humiliation. And how far did this humiliation go? Hear, and be amazed:

First, *he was obedient.* If a king should step down from his throne, and, instead of commanding, should obey, not a conqueror, but the least of his subjects, every one would be astonished at such obedience. But the obedience of Christ is infinitely more astonishing because he is not a temporal king but the Son of God and King of heaven and earth. And this great Lord and God appears in the form of a servant on earth and obeys, not only his heavenly Father ("My meat is to do," etc.—*John* 4: 34), but also his foster-father, St. Joseph, and his Mother, Mary.—*Luke* 2: 5. He even obeys a pagan power and submits himself to men, who most unjustly condemn him to death. Is there not an infinite self-humiliation and self-abasement in this incomprehensible obedience?

Secondly, *he became obedient unto death.* His obedience was not confined to a few years, but embraced his whole life, and lasted without any interruption till death. His obedience was so great that he also resolved to die. Free from even the shadow of sin, he was not, like the rest of men, subject to death, and if he died, it was not from necessity, but from choice; wherefore he says himself: "No one taketh it (my life) away from me, but I lay it down of myself."—*John* 10: 18.

Thirdly, *he become obedient, even to the death of the cross.* He was not content with dying a natural death. His obedience went so far that he died the most ignominious and painful death, the death on the cross.

In this manner did Jesus abase and humble himself, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps.—*I. Pet.* 2: 21.

2. *Salutary lessons.*

(*a.*) Christ was the Son of God, true God, but he abased himself, made no display of his prerogatives, boasted not of them, but rather concealed them, appearing upon earth in the form of a servant. Let us guard against self-conceit and boasting; if we have anything good in us, let us not ascribe it to ourselves, for it is a gratuitous gift of God: "What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"—*I. Cor.* 4: 7. If we do anything good, let us keep it secret, at least let us not seek human praise for it, that we may not lose our reward from God.

(*b.*) Christ so far humbled himself that he *took the form of a servant.* How humiliating is this for so many Christians, who desire to be more than they are, who dress beyond their means, who deck themselves out in the most fashionable clothing, unsuited to their calling; or who, in order to go forward and ascend higher, do not hesitate to slander and calumniate others, to undermine them, and to commit various injustices. Consider how vain and perishable is all human greatness: how Lucifer, because he would exalt himself above God, was humbled and cast into the abyss of hell; how no one who is not unpretending and little in his own eyes can please God and be a true disciple of Christ. Aspire not to human greatness, but to virtue and sanctity.

(*c.*) Our divine Saviour humbled himself and became *obedient.* Self-humiliation is the foundation of obedience. That there reigns among men so much self-will and disobedience comes from pride; for the proud man pretends to know everything better than others, wants others to adapt themselves to him, and wishes to rule, but not to obey. If therefore you wish to acquire the great and necessary virtue of obedience, you must learn to deny yourselves and to be humble of heart. Consider how much depends on obedience; the least work that is done from obedience is pleasing to God and is rewarded by him, but whatever is done from self-will and against obedience is worthless before him and deserves punishment rather than reward. Children should consider this well.

(*d.*) Christ was obedient *unto death,* therefore, throughout his life. There are many who, when they are grown up, will no longer hear of obedience and submission; there are children who tell their parents to their face: "I am no longer a child. I know what to do; you have no authority to command me." How different was the disposition of Jesus! He was obedient for thirty-three years—till the last moment of his life. You must know that so long as one is a subject and has superiors, one must obey: he who does not persevere in obedience to the end, can not be

saved. Christ was obedient unto death; he died voluntarily, out of obedience to his heavenly Father, in order to accomplish the work of our redemption. For us death is a stern necessity: we must die, whether we are willing or not; let us be ready to die according to the example of the saints, because God wills it, so that our death may become a sacrifice acceptable to God and profitable to ourselves. Let us pray, not only with the lips, but also with the heart: Jesus, for thee I live; Jesus, for thee I die; Jesus, to thee I belong living and dead.

(*e.*) Christ was obedient unto the death of the cross. God, our heavenly Father, willed that his Son should become man and die on the cross, and our dear Lord did on earth the will of his Father, and became obedient unto the death of the cross. Is there an obedience in heaven or on earth that could equal this obedience? If therefore obedience should demand a sacrifice and oblige us to do something humiliating and painful, we must make the sacrifice. One look at Jesus on the cross will make every act of obedience light and easy, no matter how difficult in itself.

PART II.

Exaltation follows humiliation, for Christ says: "He that shall humble himself, shall be exalted."—*Matt.* 23: 12. Because Jesus had humbled himself he was exalted. This exaltation, however, is to be understood only of his humanity; for his Divinity being essentially unchangeable could not be exalted. Let us now consider what St. Paul says of the exaltation of Christ.

1. *God also hath exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above every name.* The exaltation of Christ took place in his glorious Resurrection and Ascension. God the Father did not permit his so deeply humbled and crucified Son to moulder in the grave; he raised him on the third day from the dead, gave him a glorified and immortal body, assumed him into heaven, placed him at his right haud, and exalted him as Man above everything created, making him partake of the power and glory of his majesty. Of this exaltation the Apostle says elsewhere: "(God) Raising him up from the dead, and setting him at his right hand in the heavenly places, above all principality, and power, and virtue, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and he hath subjected all things under his feet, and hath made him head over all the Church, which is his body."—*Ephes.* 1: 20-23. The Apostle, in saying of Christ that God has given him a name that is above every other name, intimates his dignity, which transcends

all created greatness and all the prerogatives of creatures, because he has made him Lord of heaven and earth.

Here we perceive how pleasing to God is self-abasement, and how richly he rewards it. If sometimes it is difficult to subdue the motions of ambition and pride and to bear humiliations, let us remember the great reward which humility will receive hereafter. Why should we not love to be unknown in the world and to occupy the last place rather than the first, since we shall one day be the more exalted, the more we now humble ourselves? Why should we not patiently bear all humiliations, since they merit for us an eternal glory in heaven?

2. The Apostle goes on to say, *that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.* All created beings, whoever and wherever they may be, the angels and saints in heaven, men upon earth, the souls in purgatory, the evil spirits and the damned in hell, must recognize the supreme power and glory of Christ and adore him, either voluntarily and from love, as do the angels and saints in heaven, the souls in purgatory, and orthodox Christians upon earth, or involuntarily, as the evil spirits, the damned in hell, and the wicked upon earth, who now indeed abuse and blaspheme his holy name, but who will be compelled on the day of judgment to adore him. This passage of the Apostle attests also the truth of the article of faith that to Christ, according to his humanity, is due the same adoration that is due to him according to his Divinity, because the human nature of Christ is so intimately united to his divine nature that the humanity does not exist separately for itself, but has its existence only in the personality of the Son of God, so that there is but one person, the Divine Person, uniting in himself two natures, the human and the divine.

Always render to your divine Saviour the reverence and adoration due him. Never pronounce the most holy Name of Jesus otherwise than with the greatest reverence, and show it also externally by bowing your head according to the ordinance of the Church. If you come into the presence of the most holy Sacrament of the Altar, bend your knee and adore Jesus, your Lord and God, present under the appearance of bread. Honor the name of Jesus also by doing all for his love, according to the admonition of the Apostle: "Whatsoever you do in word or in work, all things do ye in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. —*Col.* 3: 17.

3. Our lesson concludes with the words of the Apostle: *Every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father.* When Christ sojourned upon earth, taught, and wrought miracles, many did not believe in him or acknowledge

him as the Son of God; when he hung on the cross, even the respect which is usually accorded to others was refused him; he was overwhelmed with contumely and derision, and treated worse than the greatest malefactor. But now, having risen from the dead and ascended into heaven, all things are changed, heaven and earth confess that he is God and possesses the power, majesty and glory of God. And though there are some who neither believe in him nor pay him homage as the Son of God and the Redeemer of the world, the time will come when, in terror and despair, they must believe in him and adore him.

In our days everywhere, but especially in cities, we meet men who deny the Divinity of Christ and look upon him merely as the Wise Man of Nazareth; nay, some go even further and blaspheme against him as an impostor. Woe to those wicked men! On the day of judgment, when Jesus will come again with great power and majesty as the Judge of the living and the dead, they will be seized with fear and anguish, and in despair will cry out to the mountains and hills: "Ye mountains, fall upon us; ye hills, cover us." Let us then adhere to him with a believing heart and confess him before men, that he may also confess us before God, his heavenly Father.

PERORATION.

I conclude with the words with which the lesson of this day begins: *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Jesus Christ.* Jesus Christ humbled himself; he, the Son of God, hid his divine dignity and lived as man in poverty and humility, suffered contumely, and died as a malefactor on the cross. So profoundly did the Son of God humble himself! But this humiliation was the way to his exaltation; now he sits at the right hand of God, crowned with honor and glory, and all creatures in heaven, upon earth, and under the earth, adore him. Let us follow him, despise the honor of the world, banish all pride and vanity out of our hearts, and walk in the path of humility and self-denial, so that the word of Jesus may be verified in us; "He that shall humble himself shall be exalted." Amen.

PALM SUNDAY.

GOSPEL. *Matt.* 21: 1—9. At that time, when Jesus drew nigh to Jerusalem, and was come to Bethphage, unto Mount Olivet,

then he sent two disciples, saying to them: Go ye into the village that is over against you, and immediately ye will find an ass tied, and a colt with her; loose them, and bring them to me; and if any man shall say anything to you, say ye that the Lord hath need of them, and forthwith he will let them go. Now all this was done, that the word might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophet, saying: Tell ye the daughter of Sion, behold thy king cometh to thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of her that is used to the yoke. And the disciples going, did as Jesus commanded them. And they brought the ass and the colt, and laid their garments upon them, and made him sit thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; and others cut down boughs from the trees, and strewed them in the way; and the multitudes that went before and that followed, cried, saying: Hosanna to the Son of David! blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

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2. HOMILETIC SKETH.

CHRIST'S TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

The gospel for this day speaks of the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem. The High Council had decreed his death and made preparations to apprehend him. But our divine Saviour, his hour not having yet come, "went into country near the desert unto a city that is called Ephrem, and there he abode with his disciples."—*John* 11: 54. The pasch being at hand, that is, the time when he would accomplish the work of our Redemption by his death on the cross, he left the solitude and sent his disciples to Jerusalem. On his way thither he distributed corporal and spiritual blessings, healing two blind men at Jericho, converting Zacheus, and instructing the people that followed him. He came to Bethphage, a village situated near Mount Olivet, and only half a mile distant from Jerusalem. This is the place where the lambs which were to be sacrificed in the temple on the following Friday were kept, and whence, five days before Easter, the Paschal lambs were solemnly led into the city. From this village, and on the same day, Christ would make his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, in order to offer himself on the Paschal feast of the Jews, that is, on our Good Friday, as the true Paschal Lamb for us, on the cross.

Let us make a short meditation on the contents of to-day's gospel:

I. On the preparation of Christ for his entry into Jerusalem;
II. On his entry itself.

PART I.

Christ sent from Bethphage two of his disciples, saying to them: *Go ye into the village that is over against you, and immediately ye will find an ass tied, and a colt with her; loose them, and bring them to me. And if any man shall say anything to you, say ye that the Lord hath need of them, and forthwith he will let them go* — *Matt.* 21: 1—4.

(*a.*) The village to which our Lord sent his disciples was probably Bethania, which, like Bethphage, was situated at the foot of Mount Olivet, and about three-quarters of a mile distant from Jerusalem. Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead, lived there and his sisters Martha and Mary Magdalen. Our Lord had frequently stayed with them, and during the last days of his life he remained there several times over-night. Enviable brother and sisters, whom Christ favored with his gracious presence! Christian parents, if good discipline and the fear of God be found in your houses, Christ will come to you and bring you graces and blessings.

(*b.*) Our Lord sent *two of his disciples.* According to tradition, these two disciples were Peter and John. By this it is indicated that God employs for the execution of his purposes those who are the most fit. Peter excelled especially *in his faith,* and John *in his love.* If we have a strong faith and an ardent love, we shall be capable of doing great things for the glory of God and the salvation of our fellow-men. Examples: St. Francis Xavier, St. Alphonsus.

(*c.*) Our Lord sent two of his disciples *to bring two asses.* A menial service. This should be a lesson to us that everything is great and meritorious in the eyes of God which is done from a motive of obedience and love. The two disciples who went by the order of their Master to bring two asses, pleased God as much as when they afterwards went out to preach the gospel and to work miracles. We must never be ashamed of humble occupations, or submit to them ungraciously. Example: Christ washed his disciples' feet; many of the saints were of the highest rank in society, yet, for the love of Christ and to exercise themselves in patience, they performed menial work, such as gathering alms, sweeping the house, washing dishes, etc. St. Bonaventure was washing dishes in the kitchen of the monastery when the cardinal's hat was brought to him.

(*d.*) Christ ordered his disciples to loose the asses which they would find tied, and to bring them to him. By this the vocation of the Apostles and their successors is clearly indicated. The ass, that is, the Jews, and the colt, the Gentiles, and, in them, all men, were tied with the cords of unbelief and sin; of themselves they could not loose the bonds, any more than a tethered ass could loose itself; this could be effected only through the Apostles and their successors, to whom Christ gave the grace and commission to preach the gospel and to bring the means of salvation, whereby men are brought to the knowledge of God and justified. Be grateful to Christ for having given you priests and pastors of souls, and be zealous in hearing the word of God and in the reception of the sacraments.

(*e.*) Our Lord told his disciples *that they would find an ass and a colt, and upon their assurance that the Lord needed them, the owner would let them go.* Christ here gives a proof of his prescience and omniscience, and, consequently, of his Divinity, showing that he had the most perfect knowledge of absent and future things. Remember always that he is everywhere and knows all things, and therefore never do anything of which you would have reason to be ashamed in his presence.

2. The Evangelist refers to the passage of the Prophet Zacharias in which the entry of Christ into Jerusalem is foretold: *All this was done that the word might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophet, saying: Tell ye the daughter of Sion: Behold thy king cometh to thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of her that is used to the yoke.*

(*a.*) The daugther of Sion is Jerusalem, but the king who comes to her is the Messias. As this prediction of the prophet, who lived five hundred years before the birth of Christ, has been fulfilled, it is a proof that he is truly the Messias, and the Redeemer of the world, foretold and sent by God.

(*b.*) The prophet says of Christ that he *cometh meek*; this means that the Messias would not conquer and maintain his kingdom by the force of arms, but by meekness and love. Christ wills not that the holy faith should be forced upon nations or individuals; on the contrary, they were to be taught with all meekness and love, and be induced voluntarly to receive the faith. The Church of God has never used force or compulsion in preaching the gospel, and if temporal rulers have sometimes compelled unbelievers and heretics to embrace the faith, she has always disapproved it. The Church teaches, admonishes, entreats, and prays, but disdains all compulsory measures, *she has martyrs, but makes*

no martyrs. Herein the Church differs and distinguishes herself from the Turks and many sects that endeavored to propagate their religion by fire and sword, and under threats and the infliction of the severest punishments. She is unjustly reproached with intolerance; she combats and condemns only the error, but not the erring.

(*c.*) Zacharias, by representing the Messias as sitting upon an ass, that is, the foal of an ass, indicates the quality of the kingdom of Christ. In the East, in times of peace, the ass was used for riding, for work in the field, and for other peaceful occupations: the ass therefore is a figure of the kingdom of Christ as a kingdom of peace, security, and tranquillity. For this reason Christ came into the world when there was peace in the whole Roman Empire; at his birth the angels sang the song of peace, and he says of himself that he brought peace and made his Apostles messengers of peace. "Into whatsoever house you enter, first say, Peace be to this house."—*Luke* 10: 5. Christ is truly the Prince of Peace, for he has established peace between heaven and earth, between God and men, making satisfaction for men and reconciling them with God; he has acquired peace for the heart of man by taking away sin, the only cause of interior disquietude and a troubled conscience; finally, he has established peace among men by making charity the chief law of his religion. Let us make this threefold peace our own and keep it carefully.

(*d.*) Zacharias speaks of an ass and her colt. As the Evangelists St. Mark (11: 7) and St. Luke (19: 35) remark, it was a colt upon which Christ entered into Jerusalem. The ass was only led along, because the colt was used to her. Why did Christ ride on the colt, and not on the ass? The ass signifies man, who had already sinned; but the colt, those souls who walk in perfect innocence and purity of morals. Christ does not reject sinners if they do penance and are converted from their evil ways, but he enters into more intimate relations with entirely pure and innocent souls; he prefers them and gives them graces which he does not bestow on others, for they are his favorite children. Consider this, young people, and preserve innocence of heart. Those who have lost their innocence must humble themselves and endeavor by penance to become worthy to walk beside the innocent, and with them to enter into heaven.

PART II.

Let us consider the entrance of the Messias into Jerusalem.

1. *The disciples going, did as Jesus commanded them. And they brought the ass and the colt, and laid their garments upon them, and made him sit thereon.* They laid their garments upon the asses for the accommodation of Christ, and thus not only furnished him with a saddle, but also caparisoned the animals out of reverence for him. Spiritual writers understand by the garments which the disciples laid upon the asses the sanctifyng grace with which the soul is adorned in the Sacraments of Baptism and Penance, and of which Christ takes possession. How is it with us? Have we preserved this garment of sanctifying grace? Alas! most of us possess it no longer; owing to the levity of our lives and contact with the world we have frequently and grievously offended God and lost his grace. But we have recovered it again by a contrite and sincere confession. Should there be any who, after their confessions, have again lost the garment of grace, let them avail themselves of the present Easter time for their reconciliation with God—make a good confession, and receive communion with a heart well prepared, that they may recover the garment of sanctifying grace.

2. As the disciples, so also the multitude of people showed their reverence for Christ, for they *spread their garments in the way, and others cut down boughs from the trees and strewed them in the way.* It may be asked: Why were there so many people present at his entrance into Jerusalem? This may be attributed partly to the fact that it was the time of the pasch, for the celebration of which great multitudes of pilgrims journeyed on the road from Jericho to Jerusalem, and partly because the news had got abroad that Christ, the prophet endowed with miraculous powers, who a few days before had raised Lazarus from the dead after he had been already four days in the grave, was on his way to Jerusalem; therefore all in the neighborhood flocked together to see and accompany him. This spreading of the garments and the strewing of boughs of trees was a custom in the East by which they expressed their reverence, joy, and loyalty at the entry of a monarch. The multitude, therefore, by divesting themselves of their garments and strewing the way with them, and by the boughs of trees, manifested their belief in Christ as the promised Messias, and paid him homage as their Lord and Redeemer. The garments which the people spread in the way, according to Albertus Magnus, signify *our bodies.* The holy martyrs, he says, spread garments of *scarlet,* because

for the love of Christ they delivered their bodies to a bloody death; the confessors spread garments of the color of *hyacinth*, because they emaciated themselves by fasting and watching, and raised their hearts heavenward; and the virgins, spread *brilliantly white* garments, because they immolated their undefiled bodies to their heavenly Bridegroom. What they did we also must do; with the holy martyrs we must mortify ourselves interiorly and exteriorly; with the confessors we must with zeal devote ourselves to the service of God; and with the virgins we must observe chastity according to our state of life.

The *boughs* which the people strewed in the way signify the *works of mercy*. The branches were taken from palm or olive trees. As the palm-tree yields a cooling wine, and the olive a strengthening and healing oil, so Christian charity consoles and strengthens the afflicted, and mitigates and heals the sufferings of the wretched and miserable. Amidst palm and olive branches Christ entered into Jerusalem; he comes with grace and mercy to those who do works of mercy out of grateful love for him. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." What an incentive for us to show mercy towards the poor and needy!

The people accompanied Christ on his entry, going before and after him, and crying out: *Hosanna to the Son of David*; *blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.* The greeting him as the Son of David means that he was a descendant of David, through whom, according to the promise of God, an eternal kingdom was to be established. — *Psalm* 117: 26. The word "Hosanna" is a joyous exclamation and means "Hail": "Hail to the Son of David!" Literally, "Hosanna" means: "Oh, redeem, redemption!" so the full meaning is: "Redeem, O God, the Son of David from his enemies (from the leaders of the Jews, who seek his life), and grant that he may redeem us."

The entrance of Christ into Jerusalem was indeed solemn, but how paltry and puerile when compared with the triumphal trains of temporal heroes! David and Solomon entered into the city on splendidly caparisoned steeds, accompanied by a multitude of proud horsemen, but our dear Lord enters Jerusalem upon a borrowed ass that had never before been used for riding; and we see in place of magnificent royal equipages the poor garments of his disciples, his retinue consisting of people whom the world looks upon as the rabble and outcasts of society. Here we see how true are the words of Christ: "My kingdom is not of this world."— *John* 18: 36. The kingdom of Christ, the Church, is to be spread over all the world and to exist to the end of time, but, like her Founder, she is always to bear in herself the character of poverty and lowliness; only on the day of judgment will the hour of triumph come for this kingdom. We need not therefore

wonder that the Catholic Church was from the beginning an object of dis like and contempt in the eyes of the world, and that especially in our days she is humbled and overwhelmed with derision and scoffs, for this is a clear proof that she is the kingdom of God as she is in conformity with her Founder.

Tertullian relates that the Gentiles, to insult Christ and his followers, caused the figure of our Lord on the cross to be depicted with the ears of an ass, whereby they would indicate that Christians are asses because they adore a crucified man as God, the cross of Christ being a stumbling-block to the Jews, and folly to the Gentiles. But this must neither discourage us nor shake our faith; on the contrary, we should judge ourselves happy when we are deemed worthy to suffer ignominy for the name of Jesus.

PERORATION.

In conclusion, I would warn you against the inconstancy of men, who to-day receive Christ with shouts of joy, and accompany him to Jerusalem with loud hosannas, but who, after a few days, will unite with the clamor of his enemies: "Away with him, away with him, crucify him."— *John* 19: 15. Oh, what pain must he have felt in his soul when he was obliged to say to himself: "These people who gather around me with so much enthusiasm, and salute me as their king, will, at the end of this week, forsake me and demand my death." Oh, how must he feel when he sees that many of those who at this Easter time go to confession and communion and promise amendment of life, will, after a few weeks, perhaps days, return to their old sins and crncify him anew. Oh, beware of such inconstancy, which fills the affectionate heart of Jesus with the greatest sorrow, and strive that your last state may not become worse than than the first. Hence, I cry out to you in the words of the Apostle: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."—*I. Cor.* 15: 58. Amen.

PALM SUNDAY.

3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

ON SATISFACTION.

Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.—Matt. 21: 9.

Our Blessed Lord, who on this day entered Jerusalem in a kind of triumph, and was there received with the loud hosannas and acclamations of the people, will also come to us at Easter. Yes, in holy communion, which at this season we must receive in accordance with the law of the Church, he will come into our hearts and dwell there. But that we may prepare for him a worthy dwelling and become sharers of his graces, we must cleanse our souls from all mortal sins, and place ourselves in the state of sanctifying grace. For this reason, before we approach the table of the Lord we receive the Sacrament of Penance.

Of this Sacrament I have spoken already several times, and explained to you four parts thereof. I come to-day to the fifth part, which is *satisfaction.* By satisfaction we understand the penance enjoined by the confessor. But we should not content ourselves with this penance, but should endeavour to satisfy the justice of God by voluntary penitential works and by bearing sufferings patiently. I shall speak about—

I. The penance which the confessor imposes upon us;
II. The penance which we must lay upon ourselves.

PART I.

Two questions are to be answered:

1. *For what purpose does the confessor impose a penance on us?*

(*a.*) *For the remission of the temporal punishment due to us on account of sin.* In the Sacrament of Penance God always remits the *eternal* punishment, with the sin, but he does not always remit the *temporal* punishment due to it. We must do penance for it either here, or hereafter in purgatory. Herein penance differs essentially from Baptism, in which not only all sins, but also all punish-

ments, temporal and eternal, are remitted. The adversaries of our faith assert that the temporal and eternal punishments are always remitted with the sin, but the Sacred Scripture contradicts this, and by many examples teaches that God remits the sins, but nevertheless inflicts temporal punishments. Thus, through the intercession of Moses, he forgave the Israelites their grievous sin, but excluded them from the promised land and let them die in the desert.—*Num.* 13. He forgave Moses the sin he had committed, but punished him by not allowing him to enter into the land of Chanaan.—*Num.* 20: 12. He forgave David his sins, but punished him by the death of his son, and inflicted also other punishments on him. "The Lord also hath taken away thy sin; nevertheless . . . the child that is born to thee shall surely die." —*II. Kings* 12: 13, 14.

That temporal punishment frequently remains after the remission of sin and the eternal punishment, has always been the doctrine of the Church. St. Augustine very beautifully says: "God holds three judgments, a judgment of mercy, a judgment of severity and justice, and a judgment mixed with both, that is, one in which justice is tempered with mercy and mercy with justice. The first, God exercises in Baptism, in which he remits sin and punishment, without satisfaction, to the sinner; the second, Christ will hold at the end of the world, when justice will preside at the tribunal and perform its part with the utmost rigor; the third, God exercises in the Sacrament of Penance, in which he forgives the sinner his sin and frees him from hell, which he had deserved, but changes eternal into temporal punishment, and demands repentance." The Council of Trent teaches the same, and shows how well it becomes the justice and mercy of God that in Baptism, but not in the Sacrament of Penance, all temporal punishments should be remitted to us.—*Sess.* 14. *Cap.* 8.

For this temporal punishment we must make satisfaction to the divine justice, or, in other words, we must perform penitential works. Here it is to be remarked, first, that we *can* satisfy the divine justice, because our penitential works, although of themselves incapable of satisfaction, have a satisfying and reconciliating virtue, through the satisfaction of Christ—*Council of Trent, Sess.* 14, *Cap.* 8. Secondly, that we *must* make satisfaction; for although Christ has satisfied superabundantly for our sins, this satisfaction will profit only those who apply it to themselves by penitential works. The words of Christ remain in force: "Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish."—*Luke* 13: 3. We must therefore diligently perform the penance enjoined on us by our confessor, in order to satisfy the divine justice for our sins and to make ourselves worthy of God's mercy: for he remits the sin and its eternal punishment only on the condition that we have a sincere desire to satisfy his justice.

If we faithfully perform the penance imposed upon us God will also remit at least a part of the temporal punishment.

(*b.*) *For the amendment of our life.* Penitential works are a punishment, and as such a means of amendment, deterring us from evil. Moreover, all penitential works which the confessor lays upon us are *exercises of virtue and good works*, and consequently are means of amendment; for the more we exercise ourselves in virtue, the weaker do our passions become, the stronger our Christian zeal and the love of God, and the more secure we are against relapse.

The penitential works which confessors enjoin comprise *prayer, fasting, alms-deeds.* Each one of these is a powerful means of amendment. By prayer we can obtain every grace, especially the grace to overcome all temptations, as Christ says: "Watch ye and pray, that you enter not into temptation."—*Matt.* 26: 41. Concerning fasting St. Augustine says: "Fasting purifies the mind, elevates the soul, subdues the flesh to the spirit, softens and humbles the heart, dispels the mist of sensuality, extinguishes the fire of concupiscence, and kindles the light of chastity." The giving of alms is also an excellent means of amendment, having its foundation in charity, which is the bound of perfection.

Finally, we must remember that the confessor must have due regard to the quality of the sin, as well as to the disposition and the circumstances of the penitents, and prescribe such penances as appear to him will most likely prevent a relapse and help a person to attain perfection.

2. *What must especially induce us diligently to perform the penance laid upon us by the confessor?*

(*a.*) *The obedience which we owe him.* Christ gave to his Apostles and their successors the power of binding and loosing. —*Matt.* 18: 18. From this it follows that confessors have the power of imposing upon sinners whom they absolve from sins certain obligations, and therefore penitential works. In fact it is their duty to do so, for God does not remit sin in the Sacrament of Penance, as in Baptism, without satisfaction; he requires us to expiate the temporal punishments of sin by penitential works. Hence the Council of Trent expressly requires the priest to impose a penance on every penitent. Now, if the priest has the power, and if it is his duty to enjoin a penance, it is of course an obligation on our part to receive and perform the penance.

(*b.*) *The thought that the neglect of the penance enjoined might render the confession invalid.* This would be the case if before absolution one already intended not to perform the penance.

The reason is because the will to make satisfaction is a necessary part of the Sacrament of Penance, and God does not remit sins to any one who is destitute of this will. From this it follows that the priest could not give absolution if the penitent declares to him that he is not willing to perform the penance imposed. It is, however, lawful to ask the confessor for another penance, if the one imposed, owing to particular circumstances, could either not be performed at all, or only with the greatest difficulty.

(*c.*) *The great benefit which is connected with the diligent performance of the penance enjoined.* The penance imposed by the confessor is a part of the Sacrament of Penance; it has therefore a sacramental virtue and operates as infallibly as the priestly absolution. As this Sacrament, if no obstacle be placed in the way, infallibly effects the forgiveness of sins and the eternal punishments due to them, so the diligent performance of the penance imposed by the confessor infallibly effects either the entire or a partial remission of the temporal punishments of sin. Who, then, would neglect to perform carefully the penance imposed? I will here remark that it should be performed at the time ap pointed by the confessor. If an impediment occur which renders it impossible or very difficult to perform the penance at the appointed time, it may be performed at some other time. If the confessor has not appointed a certain time, we should perform it as soon as possible; for the penance is a debt, and the payment of debts must not be delayed.

PART II.

With regard to the *penance we must impose upon ourselves*, we have again two questions to answer:

1. *Why must we impose penance upon ourselves?*

(*a.*) *Because the penance imposed by the confessor is, for the most part, not sufficient for the expiation of the temporal punishment due to us on account of sin.*

In former times far severer penances were imposed upon penitents than in our days, the penances now being in no respect proportioned to the sins. The Church is well aware that far severer penances would be necessary to satisfy the justice of God and to blot out the temporal punishments due to sin, but owing to the want of zeal on the part of Christians she enjoins only light ones. If she proceeded according to the ancient canonical laws, many, from fear of the severe penances, would not go to confession, and others after confession would neglect them and

thus, many Christians would lose their souls. The Church, knowing this, contents herself with light penances, preferring to send penitents to purgatory rather than risk their eternal loss. But, as the penances enjoined by the confessor are so light, we must impose penances upon ourselves, to supply by voluntary works what is wanting to the sacramental penance. If we neglect this, we shall be obliged to suffer so much the more in purgatory, and that without any merit for heaven. But is it not better to put up with the little difficulties involved by practicing penance here, than to suffer the unspeakable pains of purgatory hereafter?

(*b.*) *Because by the neglect of voluntary works of penance we deprive ourselves of much merit for heaven.* The poor souls in purgatory can in time expiate the temporal punishments of sin by their sufferings, but they can acquire no more merit for heaven. In the present life penitential works have a double advantage: they extinguish the fire of purgatory, and merit a greater glory in heaven. Who would not zealously perform voluntary penitential works?

(*c.*) *Because the neglect of voluntary penances exposes our salvation to danger.* He who shuns all austerities, and does not force himself to restrain his sensuality, will hardly be able to overcome all temptations and to guard himself against relapse. Moreover, on account of his tepidity God will not bestow his graces so abundantly, and thus it may easily happen that he will relapse into his former sins and perhaps never again change his life.

2. *What are the penitential works we must perform?*

(*a*) *Prayer fasting, and alms-deeds.* By prayer we understand all exercices of devotion and piety, private and public, the hear ing of holy mass and of the word of God, spiritual reading and meditation, the reception of the sacraments, and daily examination of conscience. Fasting comprises all interior and exterior mortifications, alms-giving, and all the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. It is self-evident that these three classes of good works are very suitable for the expiation of the temporal punishments due to sin. By three things God is offended: by the abuse of the soul, of the body, and of external goods. It is therefore expedient that we endeavor to be again reconciled to God by these three things, offering him a mortification as regards each of them. This is done by prayer, fasting, and alms-deeds.

By prayer we offer him our soul; by fasting, our body; and by alms-deeds, our external goods. "Prayer is good with fasting and alms, more than to lay up treasures of gold; for alms deli-

vereth from death, and the same is that which purgeth away sins, and maketh to find mercy and life everlasting."—*Tob* 12:8,9.

(*b.*) *The various sufferings and hardships of life*, such as labor, hunger, thirst, cold, fatigue, sickness, pain, misfortune, accidents, oppressions and persecutions on the part of men; in short, all the tribulations of life. If we bear all these things with patience, in the spirit of penance, and for the love of God, we can daily blot out a part of the temporal punishment due to our sins and acquire greater merit for heaven.

PERORATION.

This is the satisfaction which God requires of us after confession; you must not only diligently perform the penance enjoined on you by the confessor, but also lay voluntary penances upon yourselves. You must repair to the utmost of your power the scandal you have given and the injury you have unjustly done to your neighbor. If you perform these penitential works with zeal and perseverance, you will expiate your temporal punishments more and more, acquire greater merit for heaven, make progress in virtue, and hereafter take your places among the elect in heaven. Amen.

PALM SUNDAY.

4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

THE CELEBRATION OF PALM SUNDAY.

Hosanna to the Son of David: blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."—Matt. 21: 9.

With this Sunday we begin the last week of Lent, commonly called Holy Week. It is so called, because it is holy through Christ, who in it accomplished the work of our Redemption. Holy Week opens with Palm Sunday, which has its name from the blessing of the palms which are carried in the solemn procession. The procession calls to our mind the entry of Christ into Jerusalem, where he was received with the loud hosannas and acclamations of the people: "Hosanna to the Son of David;

blessed is that cometh in the name of the Lord." To-day in the holy mass the history of the passion is read for the first time, because during Holy Week we should devote our attention in a very special way to the passion and death of Christ.

I shall speak to-day of the celebration of Palm Sunday, and give you the necessary explanation concerning—

I. The procession with the blessed palm branches;
II. The reading of the passion of our Lord.

PART I.

Before mass the palms are blessed, immediately after which the procession takes place with the palms. Let us consider the procession.

I. How it moves out of the church;
II. What takes place outside the church;
III. How it returns into the church.

1. The priest and his assistants form in procession; the people join in and follow them. All, with blessed palm-branches in their hands, go out of the church. This ceremony has a deep significance.

(*a.*) The priest as the principal person in the procession represents Christ, the head of the Church. Those in the procession follow the priest, for Jesus is "the way, the truth, and the life." *John* 14: 6. We must follow him, if we wish to attain salvation: "My sheep hear my voice; and I know them and they follow me."—*John* 10: 27.

(*b.*) The priest *goes out of the church*, whereby we are reminded of the mystery of the Incarnation of Christ. For as the priest leaves the church, so the only-begotten Son of God left heaven, as it were, becoming man, and walking upon earth in the form of a servant. His life for thirty-three years is an uninterrupted succession of sufferings and persecutions; finally he dies a most ignominious and painful death on the cross. Yet he suffers and dies joyfully since it is for the redemption of man, whom he loves most tenderly, and whose salvation he ardently longs for. You should think of all this when you see the procession moving out of the church; and since you also leave the church, you should consider that, having sinned, you have no longer any claim to heaven. You should resolve to open heaven for yourselves again by true repentance.

(*c.*) The priest and the faithful *carry palms in their hands.* Palm is the emblem of victory, a victory that can be acquired only after a hard struggle with the enemy. This sign of victory belongs principally to our Saviour, whom the priest represents, for he has overcome the world and the devil, and he triumphs now and for ever at the right hand of God. We also carry palms in our hands, to signify that, after the example of Christ, we will bravely wrestle with the enemies of our salvation, and assisted by his grace with him gain the victory.

2. On the return of the procession, two or four chanters enter the church, and shut the door; then *Gloria, Laus,* is sung antiphonally by the chanters and those outside; the sub-deacon knocks three times with the cross at the door, and it is opened. What does all this mean?

(*a.*) The door of the church signifies the gate of heaven, which had been barred against mankind since the fall of Adam. No one under the Old Law could enter into heaven, no one was there but the angels, praising and glorifying God; and behold, the chanters, representing the angels, alone remain in the church, and there sing verses of the hymn *Gloria, laus,* alternately with there who are outside. Oh, how sad was the lot of man under the Old Law, how hard his death, since even the just could not enter into heaven!

(*b.*) *The sub-deacon knocks three times with a cross at the door; it is opened, and the procession enters.* The cross on which Christ died is, as it were, the key that opens for us the portals of heaven. The sub-deacon knocks three times, and this signifies the three years of Christ's public life, also the three hours during which he hung on the cross, and the excruciating pains which he endured for our sins. Our first parents had no trouble to shut heaven against themselves and their posterity, but our dear Lord spent his whole life in suffering and persecution, and shed the last drop of his precious blood, in order to reopen it for us. Consider this and take to heart the words of Jesus: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away."—*Matt.* 11: 12. By an easy, indolent life you can never enter heaven.

3. *The procession returns into the church.*

(*a.*) This return into the church signifies the triumphal entry of Christ into heaven forty days after his Resurrection. Not he alone entered triumphantly into heaven, but all the just who lived under the Old Law and who up to that time had been in limbo followed him. The faithful follow the priest into the church in

the procession of to-day as those followed their divine Saviour into heaven. Hence David says: "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive" (those that had been detained in limbo).—*Ps.* 67 : 19.

(*b.*) The procession returning into the church reminds us also of Christ's triumphal entry into heaven after the last judgment. That will be the last and most solemn procession and triumphal train. The divine Saviour, surrounded by countless angels, as conqueror over sin, death, and hell, will go before; all the saints of God will follow him in dazzling array, with glittering crowns on their heads, and the palm of victory in their hands, and, singing canticles of joy, they will enter into the mansions of the heavenly Jerusalem. Which of us would not wish to participate in such a procession? By now following Christ faithfully on the way of the cross, we shall render ourselves worthy to follow him in his triumphal entry into heaven.

PART II.

The priest reads to-day the history of the passion according to St. Matthew. We will consider—

1. *Why the passion is read to-day, and*

2. *What signification the ceremonies have.*

1. One might think it premature to read the passion now, for our Saviour did not commence it to-day, but on Holy Thursday. To-day is a day of jubilee for Christ, for on this day he made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. How then does it come to pass that the passion is read to-day? The Church has an important reason for it. She intends to place the fickleness of the Jewish people vividly before our eyes. These people, full of enthusiasm, do homage to Christ to-day, but after a few days they will clamor for his death. The Church knows this fickleness; for that reason the procession, which symbolizes his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, is followed by the reading of the history of the passion, as if she would say: Behold, how fickle and inconstant are the Jews! To-day they shout to him hosannas and with loud acclamations of joy receive him into their city, and five days later they prefer the murderer Barrabas and nail Christ to the cross.

Oh, that we may not resemble these fickle Jews! Oh, that especially at this Easter time, not one of us may dare, after confession and communion, to return to a sinful life! Take to heart the word of the Prince of the Apostles: "For if, flying from the

pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they be again entangled in them and overcome, their latter state is become unto them worse than the former, forit had been better for them not to have known the way of justice, than after they have known it, to turn back from the holy commandment, which was delivered to them."—*II. Pet.* 2: 20, 21. Let us to-day, when the passion is read make a firm resolution at this holy time of Easter to devote great attention to the worthy reception of the holy sacraments, and perseveringly lead a penitential life.

2. *There are several ceremonies at the reading of the passion.*

(*a.*) Before the priest begins to read the passion, *all the lights on the altar are extinguished* [local custom]. This is done to indicate the extinction of the light of the world in the death of Christ. When you see the lights on the altar extinguished, think of the death of Jesus and ask him to grant you the grace to make a holy and happy end.

(*b.*) The priest does not go, as he usually does, to the middle of the altar before reading the gospel, *to implore the blessing and grace of God, that he may worthily and suitably announce the word of God,* but he begins at once to read the passion, to signify that with Christ, whom he have lost by his death on the cross, all graces are taken from us: Christ being the source of all graces, if we have him no more, like the branches separated from the vine, we can produce no fruit, that is, do nothing meritorious for life everlasting. Consider this, and be solicitous not to lose Jesus by a mortal sin, or, if you have lost him, seek and find him again without delay by true repentance.

(*c.*) Before the reading of the passion the priest does not say: *Dominus vobiscum,* "The Lord be with you." He omits this salutation, because he remembers that Judas saluted Christ saying, "Hail, Master," and betrayed with him a kiss. He thinks at the same time of those Christians who in a state of sin approach the table of the Lord and commit incomparably greater treason than Judas, because they not only kiss him, but compel him to enter into their unclean hearts. Oh, that none of us may burden his conscience with this horrible treason and sacrilege!

(*d.*) When the priest comes to the passage which mentions the death of Christ, he kneels down, bows his head, and adores him who in his infinite love vouchsafed to die for us on the cross. Adore your crucified love with the priest.

(*e.*) When the priest has finished the reading of the passion, the server does not say, as at the end of the gospel, *Laus tibi, Christe*—"Praise be to thee, O Christ." He keeps silence on account of the scoffs and blasphemies which the Jews heaped upon our divine Redeemer during his passion and death. Think of this contumely, and keep away from those who scoff at our holy religion, for to scoff at religion and the Church is to scoff at Christ. If you are abused, insulted, and scoffed at, take Christ for your example, and be meek and patient. Consider yourselves happy when you are deemed worthy to suffer ignominy for the name of Christ.

PERORATION.

I have now explained to you how Palm Sunday is celebrated. You know the meaning of the procession with the palms, and of the passion, which the priest reads to-day. Let me exhort you, during this week, devoutly to meditate on the passion and death of Christ, and to consider how dearly he has loved you, and at what a price he has ransomed your soul. Such a meditation can not fail to be a powerful incentive for you to thank your Redeemer, to love him, and henceforth to devote your life to him. How happy will you be if now and for evermore you give yourselves without reserve to Jesus, your Lord and God. You will enjoy the sweetest peace here, and have the blessed hope that after these fleeting years you will reign with Christ in the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

PALM SUNDAY.

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5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

THE SINNER, A TETHERED ASS.

Go ye into the village that is over against you, and immediately ye shall find an ass tied.—Matt. 21: 2.

Christ sends two of his disciples into an adjacent village, probably Bethania, telling them that they would find an ass tied, and a colt with her; that they should loose them and bring them to him. The disciples did as Jesus commanded them; they loosed

the ass and the colt, and brought them. As the gospel further mentions, Christ made use of this ass and her colt at his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, when he was received with the loud hosannas and acclamations of the people, homage being paid him as the Messias and the Redeemer of the world, in the sight of the whole city.

The Fathers of the Church and spiritual writers see in the ass tied, which the disciples loosed by the order of Christ, and brought to him, a figure of the sinner, who is tied like the ass, and must be loosed from his sins by the disciples of Christ, that is, the priests, if he is to come to God and be saved. This figure shall be the subject of our meditation to-day. I therefore say: The sinner is a tethered ass. He is—

I. An ass;
II. A tethered ass.

PART I.

The sinner is an ass.

1. The ass everywhere is considered to be a *dull, stupid animal.* If you wish to say that a man is very dull and stupid, you compare him to that animal. Now, it is certain that there is no man duller and more stupid than the sinner. And why?

(*a.*) A person who would exchange his property worth a million of dollars for a few broken pieces of glass, which are worth nothing would certainly be foolish. What does the sinner do? He barters the grace of God for a sin. What value has the grace of God? It is worth more than all the treasures of the world, for with all these it can not be bought. It is, in a certain sense, worth as much as the precious blood of Christ, for he shed his blood in order to recover for us the grace which we had lost. Therefore, the Prince of the Apostle says: "Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold or silver . . . but with the precious blood of Christ."—*I. Pet.* 1: 18, 19. And what is sin worth, for which one exchanges the grace of God, this precious treasure? Nothing, for the sinner gets nothing for it—nay, less than nothing; he gets shame, misery, and punishment upon earth, or a fleeting pleasure, which vanishes like smoke; or something which does not satisfy the heart and which he must leave behind at his death. Judge for yourselves; is the sinner not fitly compared to an ass?

(*b.*) A person is dull of intellect who, knowing that by eating certain food he will contract a painful sickness or expose himself

to the danger even of death, does not refrain from that food. What does the sinner do? He sins, although he knows that sin will make him most miserable and cause his eternal death. To lose your soul and heaven, and to plunge headlong into eternal damnation for the sake of the gratification of a vile passion, is not this the height of folly? Is the sinner not as dull as an ass?

(*c.*) A certain man, as we read, once bequeathed one hundred dollars to the most stupid man that could be found. After his death his heirs made inquiries for the most stupid man, in order to give him the legacy. After long searching and many inquiries they found a man who had been made councillor by the people though he had recently killed another councilor in the same place. To this new councillor they handed the legacy, saying: "The legacy of one hundred dollars belongs to you, for you certainly are the most stupid man, because you trust this rabble and allow yourself to be made councillor by them." If such a legacy were offered now, we should not be compelled to make lengthy iniquiries as to whom it should be given; with a good conscience it could be handed to any sinner, for every sinner knows and believes that his sinful life will take him to the place where already millions of sinners have gone—into the abyss of hell—and yet this does not deter him from sin. It is said that the ass goes on the ice but once; the second time he is suspicious, because he is afraid of slipping and falling. But the sinner exposes himself again and again to the sinful occasions which have frequently caused his fall. Is not the sinner duller and more stupid than an ass?

2. The ass is a *lazy* animal. Labor and exertion, especially of long duration, are repugnant to him; to hurry on the road is not his business; and even to keep him going slowly a driver must continually be behind him. The sinner too is lazy.

(*a.*) *He neglects his duties.* Many days pass without even a short morning and evening prayer; he seldom hears a sermon; he neglects to hear mass on Sundays and holidays; many a year passes without confession and communion; holy seasons and feasts come and go; he does not profit by them.

(*b.*) *Whatever he does, he does carelessly and only by halves.* How cold and distracted is his prayer! He assists at mass without devotion; he is inattentive during the sermon, or gives himself over to worldly and sinful thoughts; at the reception of the sacraments he lacks all fervor and determination to amend his life.

(*c.*) *Such good works as he does perform are performed more from compulsion than good will.* To this class belong young people

who fulfil their religious duties merely because they are kept to them by authority of their parents. How many dress plainly, live temperately, abstain from frivolous enjoyments, because on account of poverty they can not do otherwise!

3. *The ass is a stubborn animal.* So is the sinner—

(*a.*) *As regards God.* He has many inspirations and interior admonitions to virtue, but he disregards them; many means of grace and opportunities of repentance and amendment offered to him, but he makes no use of them. An old man of sixty years of age had for years neglected to attend church and fulfil his Easter duty; he led an unchristian life, and endeavored by spreading bad books to instil the spirit of unbelief and irreligion into others also. A mission was given in the place where he lived; even great sinners embraced the opportunity, made their peace with God and were converted; but he remained obstinate. The mission was scarcely over when he was struck by apoplexy and lay unconscious for two days, and finally died without a sign of repentance. So stubborn can man be; but his end is terrible.

(*b.*) *As regards men.* How many sons and daughters grieve their parents by their stubbornness! How many Christians steel their hearts against the salutary admonitions of their pastors and superiors, and obstinately abide in their evil ways! With how many do even the punishments which God and men inflict on them produce no effect. What animal could be so stubborn as many sinners are? Woe to them, for the word of the Apostle applies to them: "According to thy hardness and impenitent heart, thou treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the just judgment of God."—*Rom.* 2: 5. Pharao in Egypt.

4. The ass *has an unpleasant voice;* his bray is so disagreeable that even a lion can not stand it, but takes to flight.

(*a.*) The *voice* of the sinner is also unpleasant. How horrid is the conversation, the songs, and jests which wicked people indulge in! How intolerable to the ear of a pious Christian are the curses and blasphemies which a man, in his passion, utters against God and his creatures! And when vain, conceited men boast and trumpet forth whatever is praiseworthy in themselves, and like the Pharisee in the temple take pride in their good works, and despise others—are not all who hear them disgusted?

(*b.*) And not only the words of the sinner, but also *his works* are hateful to God and man. Are not wilful murder, the

sin of Sodom, oppression of the poor, defrauding laborers of their wages, sins crying to heaven for vengeance? Are not all sins, that are committed in secret or come to the knowledge of the world, hateful to God and all good people, because they give scandal and cause much mischief in the world?

5. *The ass is an ungrateful animal.* He kicks and bites his own master who feeds him daily, and he often throws his rider. How ungrateful too is the sinner:

(*a.*) *Towards God.* What use does he make of the gifts of nature? He uses them to offend God. The body and its senses and members serve him for the gratification of his passions; the faculties of the soul, free-will, reason, memory, he abuses for the commission of countless sins; he spends his money to gratify his pride or his impure desires, or in gething drunk, etc. Is not this ingratitude towards God! And how does the sinner act in regard to supernatural things? Does he listen to the inspirations of grace? No, he shuts his ears to them. Does he attend to the good lessons and admonitions which he frequently receives? No, he disregards and spurns them. Does he avail himself of the sacraments for his purification and sanctification? No, he receives them either unworthily or not at all. Is not this ingratitude towards God?

(*b.*) *Towards men.* How ungrateful are many children towards their parents! They hardly ever think of the many benefits which they have received from them; they treat them, especially in their old age, most uncharitably and rudely, and not unfrequently wish for their death. How ungrateful are many towards their benefactors, and especially towards the pastors of their souls! Rudeness. calumny, mockery, criticism, and contempt are the thanks for all the benefits they receive from them. Is not this ingratitude towards men?

From what has been said it is evident that every sinner, if he will only acknowledge the truth, must say to himself: "I am like the ass."

PART II.

The sinner is a tethered ass.

When our Lord sent two of his disciples to the neighboring village he told them that they would find an ass *tied* and her colt. The gospel speaks of an ass that was tied.

The sinner is not only an ass, but an ass that is tied and has no liberty. What are the cords with which he is tied?

(*a.*) *Blindness.* Sin blinds man. St. Theophilus says: "Sin is a mist which darkens the eye of the spirit and veils the splendor of the sun; it obscures the soul and takes from her the faculty of receiving the rays of heavenly light." There is no more wretched state than to live in sin, for he who lives in it has no peace with God, is incapable of doing anything meritorious for heaven, and is in imminent danger of being lost for ever. But the unfortunate sinner does not know his terrible state; he is like a blind man who walks on the brink of a precipice without having any knowledge of it. If his conscience sometimes opens his eyes, he strives in every way to silence it, saying: "Others are not better than I am, and yet they hope for heaven. God is infinitely merciful, and has frequently shown mercy to sinners who had sinned more grievously than I. I am young and strong. There is time enough yet for repentance." In such a way the sinner calms his uneasy mind, his blindness is the cord that keeps him tied so that he continues in his sinful life.

(*b.*) *Bad habits.* If one frequently relapses into a sin, a habit is formed which exercises so powerful an influence over one that one can break it either with great difficulty or not at all. Habit is second nature. "If the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots, you also may do well when you have learned evil."—*Jer.* 13: 23. He sometimes attempts to break the chains which bind him to sin, but in vain; the fetters are too strong for him to tear asunder. If God does not come to his rescue by an extraordinary grace, he will remain a slave to his evil habit, and perish. Hence St. Bernard says: "The repeated sin begets habit; the habit, necessity; the necessity, impossibility; and the impossibility leads to despair; and despair, to damnation."

(*c.*) *The occasion of sin.* He who is in the proximate occasion of sin and does not avoid it, will certainly sin, hence St. Augustine says. "To love the proximate occasion of sin and to fall into the old sin is one and the same thing." But it is no easy task to break away from such occasions, especially if they have been frequent. How often do priests, parents, and others endeavor to put an end to a sinful friendship between two single persons. The same may be said of drunkards and gamblers. No advice or persuasion can induce them to avoid the places where they have frequently sinned by drunkenness and gambling.

Our Lord ordered the two disciples to loose the ass and to bring her and the colt to him. This they did. They loosed the ass and brought her and her colt to him.

2. Who looses sinners that are tied with the bonds of blindness, habit, and the occasion of sin? The disciples of Christ, that is, the

priests, to whom it is said: "Whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven."—*Matt.* 18: 18. In order to loose the bonds of the sinner they preach to him—

(*a.*) *The word of God.* This, indeed, is a very effectual means for the conversion of the sinner, for it opens his eyes, makes known to him his wretched condition, and moves him to resolve to do penance. St. John Capistran preached upon a certain occasion on the sad consequences of the passion of gambling, and on the vain fashions of women. After the sermon many gamblers brought their cards and dice, and many females their luxurious ornaments, to the market-place, cast them into the fire, and burnt them. St. Anthony of Padua was one day preaching to more than twelve thousand people, among whom were great sinners; they took the sermon so much to heart that sometimes nothing could be heard but weeping and sobbing, so that he was obliged to stop his discourse. Some cried out: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Others struck their breasts, saying: "Woe is me! I have deserved hell!" Others lifted up their hands to heaven and said: "My Jesus, I will sin no more! See what power the word of God has to loose the sinner from his bonds! For this purpose—

(*b.*) *They administer the Sacraments.* I have only two sacraments in view, the Sacraments of Penance and of the Blessed Eucharist. If you are bound and tied down by a thousand ropes, and you make a contrite and sincere confession, you will be loosed; and if afterwards you go to communion, you come to Jesus, or rather Jesus comes to you, takes possession of your heart, and giving himself to you enriches you with all graces. For faith teaches us that the priests have power in the Sacrament of Penance to forgive all sins without exception, for it is said to them: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them."—*John* 20: 23. And again, faith teaches us that in the Sacrament of the Altar Jesus Christ is really present as God and man under the appearances of bread and wine, and that he gives himself to us in holy communion for the nourishment of our souls. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life."—*John* 6: 55.

PERORATION.

I have now explained to you that the sinner resembles an ass, and indeed an ass that is tied, and who it is that can loose him. You do not wish to be in such a condition; if anybody compared you to an ass, you would feel highly offended, and, perhaps, demand satisfaction. But if you wish to escape this charge, guard

against being sinners. Employ the present time for your conversion and the amendment of your life, that you may be able to say joyfully on Easter Sunday: "Our soul hath been delivered, as a sparrow out of the snare of the fowlers. The snare is broken, and we are delivered."—*Ps.* 123: 7. Amen.

PALM SUNDAY.

6. MORAL SKETCH.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EASTER COMMUNICANTS.

Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.—Matt. 21: 9.

Our divine Saviour entered Jerusalem to-day in a kind of triumph, and was received with the loud hosannas and acclamations of the populace. The good, simple-hearted people met him with great joy. The Scribes and Pharisees met him as enemies; their hearts being full of envy and hatred they were indignant at his triumphal entry, and deliberated how to put him to death. How different was the manner in which Christ was received on his solemn entry into Jerusalem by those two classes!

It is now Paschal time, and all Catholics are strictly bound to receive the Blessed Eucharist. Christ will then also come to us, but how the reception given him by some Christians at their Easter communion will differ from that of others!

I. Some will receive him as the simple-hearted people;
II. Others as the Scribes and Pharisees.

PART I.

1. When the people heard that Christ was coming to Jerusalem they went forth to meet him, to manifest their reverence. Good, simple-hearted Christians now at this Easter time go to meet their Saviour by a worthy preparation for holy communion. They take to heart the admonition of the Apostle: "Let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice."—*I. Cor.* 11: 28. Jesus, the purest and holiest, will dwell only in pure hearts; therefore, in the "Following of Christ" he says to the Christian soul (*Book, iv. c.* 12): "I am the lover of

purity and the giver of all holiness. I seek a pure heart, and there is the place of my rest. Make ready for me a large upper room furnished, and I will make the pasch with thee, together with my disciples. If thou wilt have me come to thee and remain with thee, purge out the old leaven and make clean the habitation of thy heart." The Emperor Frederick one day went out hunting, and a nobleman, meeting him, invited him to his castle. But seeing the room full of cobwebs, he left angrily, saying. "This room may be good enough for hounds, but not for an emperor" How can Jesus, the King of heaven and earth, dwell in a soul defiled with sin? To receive holy communion worthily we must be free from every mortal sin. "Let none approach but his friends, no one who is avaricious, no one who is a usurer, no one who is unchaste."—*St. Chrysostom.* Examine not only your present, but also your past life, and especially your former confessions, and see that everything was right, that you may render yourselves worthy to make a good confession and communion.

2. Some took branches of palm trees (*John* 12: 13), others cut down boughts from the trees, and went to meet Jesus.—*Mark* 11: 8, 9. With such branches of palm and olive trees, those who are anxious to receive Easter communion worthily must meet Jesus. They carry palm branches in their hands as a sign of the victory which they have won over the world, the flesh, and the devil. They carry olive branches to indicate that by a good confession they have cleansed their conscience from sin, reconciled themselves with God, and possess his peace. How are matters with you on this point? Are you resolved to give up bad habits, to avoid the proximate occasions of sin, and to eradicate inordinate inclinations and passions? Have you a true supernatural contrition for your sins? Are you really in earnest about the amendment of your life? Do you seriously reflect that only on these conditions you can worthily confess and communicate? It is also very important that before the reception of the sacraments you labor with fervor for the amendment of your life. Avoid the proximate occassions of sin. If you are infected with a bad habit, free yourselves; if you possess the goods of others, restore them; if you live in enmity with your neighbor, become reconciled to him; in a word, set the affairs of your conscience in order, that, transformed and renewed in heart, you may go worthily to confession and communion.

3. *And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way.* —*Matt.* 21: 8. All who are solicitous to make a worthy confession do this in a moral sense. They put off the garment of pride, covetousness, lust, anger, envy, gluttony, and sloth, and put on the garment of humility, liberality, chastity, meekness, temper-

ance in eating and drinking, brotherly love, and diligence, according to the admonition of the Apostle: "Put off the old man, who is corrupted according to the desires of error; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind. And put on the new man, who, according to God, is created in justice and holiness of truth."—*Eph.* 4: 22-24. A worthy communion requires that you renew your mind and conduct, and become conformable to Christ interiorly and exteriorly. The soul must die to the creature and live to the Creator; you must remove out of the heart what is not of God and for God. "Although a soul is in the state of grace, it is captivated by earthly things, the love of God finds less room in the heart."—*St. Alphonsus.*

When the multitudes saw Jesus coming, and while accompanying him on his solemn entry into Jerusalem, they exclaimed: *Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.* Pious Christians always receive holy communion with reverence and devotion. They adore Jesus with heart and mouth, praise and glorify him, humble themselves most profoundly before him, return thanks, vow obedience, love, and fidelity to him, and ask him with confidence for grace. You must do the same, if you wish holy communion to bring you grace and life everlasting. The greater the devotion with which you go to communion, the greater will be the fruit you will reap and the greater the benefits you will receive.

PART II.

1. The Scribes and Pharisees had also come to the triumpha entry of Christ into Jerusalem, but it was not from reverence, loyalty, or love for him, but from worldly considerations. Ah! how many Christians are like them, and go to holy communion only out of human respect, because they fear the people.—*Luke* 20: 19. They think: Now it is Easter time the Church strictly requires every one to go to communion; I shall get into some trouble if I omit it. People will think me an unbeliever or a bad Catholic; it might injure my business or trade. Can it be expected that such Catholics will receive communion worthily? I doubt it very much; as external compliance with the precept of the Church is their only aim they will take but little pains to make a good confession; they will not even think of renouncing their worldly and sinful life and of serving God with fervor; they will approach the table of the Lord without the proper preparation, and, consequently, unworthily. How many at this time will go to communion in such a manner! Are there not some among us who will go more from compulsion than from devotion?

2. Some of the Pharisees were angry when they heard the loud hosannas of the people, and even demanded that Christ should rebuke them, saying: "Master, rebuke thy disciples."—*Luke* 19: 39. It is also a stumbling-block in the eyes of some Catholics to see how others pray, go to church frequently, prefer to be with Jesus in the most holy Sacrament rather than participate in worldly joys and pleasures, and frequently go to communion. Such pious people in their eyes do not keep up with the times, and are a century behind the age. Now, if such Catholics submit to the precept of confession and communion at Easter, will they do so worthily? They may, but who will venture to affirm it? If for the worthy reception of the sacraments no humility, no repentance, no Christian sentiment or feeling were required, then we might believe that they will receive them worthily; but, as these virtues are absolutely necessary for the worthy reception of the holy sacraments. what else can be expected but that by their confession and communion they will load their conscience with a double sacrilege?

3. The Scribes and Pharisees accompanied Christ at his solemn entry into Jerusalem, not as his friends, but as *his enemies*, for they had already sought to kill him.—*John* 11: 53. Catholics who, after a bad confession, approach the table of the Lord, resemble them. Receiving unworthily, they sin against the body and blood of our Lord, crucifying him anew. "Whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord" (*I. Cor.* 11: 27), that is, he is as guilty as if he had killed our Lord and shed his blood. For every grievous sin is, as the Apostle says, a crucifixion of Christ, because it could be satisfied for only by his crucifixion; this is much more true of an unworthy communion, which is the most sacrilegious abuse of the most holy thing we possess. Therefore the Apostle declares that the unworthy communicant eats and drinks judgment and eternal damnation to himself: "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord."—*I. Cor.* 11: 29. Among the Athenians it was a custom to compel a person condemned to death to take into his mouth and swallow a piece of paper on which the sentence of death was written. By this it was indicated to the condemned that the sentence of death was irrevocable and that there was no hope of pardon. In like manner, those who receive unworthily, eat the sentence of their damnation, and transform, as it were, this sentence into flesh and blood, and imprint the seal of condemnation on their souls.

A great number of Catholic during Paschal time will burden their conscience with this great and fatal crime of an unworthy

and sacrilegious communion. How many will confess without true contrition! They are not in the least sorry for having offended God, their most rigorous Judge and most kind Father; they do not change their perverse mind, and are attached to the object of their sin after confession as before. They receive communion unworthily, because their confession was invalid for the want of contrition. How many will confess without a firm purpose of amendment! They are not resolved to forsake their cursing and blaspheming, their shameless corversation and obscenities, their night-prowling, drinking and gambling, and sinful company; to give up their enmities, to restore ill-gotten goods, and to repair the injury they have caused by their sins. They receive communion unworthily, because they are destitute of the resolution to amend their lives. How many will conceal grievous sins in their confessions, purposely diminish the number of their sins, or palliate them in such a manner that they appear only as small faults? They receive unworthily, because their confession is not sincere.

PERORATION.

Take to heart what I have said, and guard against an unworthy communion. Do not renew the crime of the Jews, and do not crucify Jesus anew. Endeavor to make a good confession, for this is the most necessary preparation for a worthy communion. Whoever upon examining his conscience feels that his former confessions are invalid, must tell his confessor at Easter, so that this may be rectified. If you have by a good confession cleansed your conscience from all sins, approach the altar with a living faith, profound humility, and the greatest reverence and devotion, that you may receive worthily, and that the word of Jesus may be verified in you: "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life."—*John* 6: 55.

PALM SUNDAY.

7. MORAL SKETCH.

HOW WE ARE TO RECEIVE JESUS IN THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR.

Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.—Matt. 21: 9.

For the last time Christ enters Jerusalem, and homage is paid to him as the Redeemer of the world, in the sight of all the city. As he approaches, riding on the colt of an ass, there is a joyous commotion, and from all sides the people stream out to meet him, and full of enthusiasm cry out: *Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

In remembrance of this solemn entry of our Lord into Jerusalem, the Church every year on this day makes a solemn procession with palm branches, and offers to her God and Redeemer the sacrifice of adoration with a joyful heart. By this procession she reminds us also of the merciful entry which he makes into our hearts in these days. The holy season of Easter is now at hand, during which, in compliance with the precept of the Church, we must receive the most holy Eucharist. He who on this day solemnly entered into Jerusalem will come to us in this Sacrament and unite himself most intimately to us and make us partakers of all the treasures of his love. The question is: How must we receive him, that his entry into our heart may bring us salvation? With the answer to this question we will occupy ourselves to-day. We must receive him with a heart—

I. Cleansed from sins; and
II. Adorned with virtues.

PART I.

In order worthily to receive Jesus in holy communion, we must have a heart that is cleansed from all evil, a heart—

1. *That is free at least from every mortal sin.* As our faith teaches us, Christ comes to us when we receive holy communion, with his Divinity and humanity; he who is holiness itself, whom the trembling angels and saints adore. How pure and spotless must be the heart which is to serve as a dwelling-place for so

great a guest! David wished to build a temple to the Lord, but the word of God came to him: "Thou hast shed much blood, and fought many battles, so thou canst not build a house to my name." —*I. Paralip.* 21: 8, 9. If David, who had shed blood only in lawful wars, was not clean enough to build a temple to the Lord, how can a Christian dare to receive his Lord and God into his heart defiled with mortal sins? This would be a greater sin and crime than that committed by his murderers. "Whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord" (*I. Cor.* 11: 27.), that is, he is as guilty as if he is crucified Jesus and his blood. Again the Apostle says: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself."—*I. Cor.* 11: 29. Holy communion, this heavenly medicine which brings grace and life to the just, is changed in the hearts of sinners into the most injurious poison, and causes death and perdition. St. Augustine says: "The Sacrament is one thing, and the virtue of the Sacrament another. Many take from the altar and die, and they die because they take. Therefore the Apostle says: He eateth and drinketh judgment to himself. For the morsel which Christ gave to Judas was not poison, but after he had taken it, the enemy entered into him, not because he had taken something bad, but because he received the good unworthily."

Examples: St. Cyprian relates how a woman who, having concealed a mortal sin in confession, ventured to approach the table of the Lord. She had no sooner received the sacred Host on her tongue, than she was seized with terrible spasms and convulsions and died immediately. In the year 1833, in Cochin China, a young man went to confession, but concealed a mortal sin, and afterwards went to communion. The punishment followed immediately. He became a raving maniac, ran out of the church, and cried out: "I am Judas! I have betrayed Jesus!" They exhorted him to do penance, but he continued to cry out: "I am Judas! I have betrayed Jesus!" So he lived and died; he had eaten to himself judgment at the moment he received communion with an unclean heart.

God sometimes makes such terrible examples, says St. Cyprian, in order to make us cautious and to deter us from an unworthy communion. Let no one whose heart is contaminated with grievous sins dare to come to the table of the Lord.

2. *In which there is no voluntary inclination to evil.* Evil inclinations, as long as they involuntary, must not keep us away from holy communion; on the contrary, they should encourage us, because communion is a powerful means of weakening evil inclinations and strengthening us in virtue. "He who frequently and devoutly receives this heavenly nourishment, receives such power

and strength that the deadly poison of evil inclinations loses its virulence and can by no means bring death to the soul."—*St. Francis of Sales.* By the evil inclinations which must be banished from the soul we understand the delight in sin, which one entertains in the heart and nourishes as an object of affection, although one does not in reality commit the sin. For example, you no longer commit a sin of impurity in act, but you are fond of seeing the person with whom you formerly enjoyed a sinful familiarity; you seek her company, think of her often with pleasure, and presents from her are dear tokens to you. You have lived at enmity with your neighbor and offended him in word and deed. You injure him now no more, but you can not look at him with friendly eyes, you avoid him, and can only think and speak of him with aversion. You have oftentimes spoken ill of others and been guilty of many detractions, slanders, and calumnies. You avoid doing this now, but it gives you pleasure to hear slanders in regard to them.

These are voluntary inclinations to sin, from which you must necessarily cleanse your hearts, that you may not receive communion unworthily. God is a jealous God; you must remove out of your heart everything that displeases him.

3. *Which is free from venial sins as far as possible.* Although a venial sin is something insignificant in the eyes of men, it is not so in the eyes of God; the smallest fault is to him a greater offense then the greatest insult offered to us. Therefore the saints were very scrupulous about venial sins, and dared not go to communion when they were conscious of the least fault. St. Chrysostom once become somewhat angry with two persons who misbehaved, and on account of this small fault, if fault it was, he dared not go to communion. St. Ambrose forbade two of his deacons, on account of a few idle words, to go to communion until they had done severe penance. We must, however, distinguish between voluntary and involuntary venial sins. To voluntary venial sins belong those for which one has an attachment, which one is not earnestly resolved to avoid, which one commits on every occasion and even with deliberation. These wholly voluntary venial sins displease our divine Saviour exceedingly, and prevent him from giving us his grace abundantly. He who wishes to receive communion with benefit, must be careful not to commit a venial sin voluntarily. Concerning involuntary venial sins, that is, those which are committed from human weakness, inadvertence, or surprise, they are not an obstacle to communion, but, nevertheless, we must profoundly humble ourselves on account of them, be sorry for them, and with the help of God's grace endeavor to avoid them for the future.

PART II.

In order to receive communion worthily and with fruit, our hearts must be adorned with virtues; these virtues are—

1. *Faith.* The Fathers of the Church call the most holy Sacrament of the Altar the *mystery of faith;* and so it is. We see nothing in this Sacrament but a little white host, which, as every one knows is prepared from flour and water. And this host, which looks and tastes like bread, which remains immovable wherever you lay it, which can be broken and destroyed, is, as soon as it is consecrated by the priest, Jesus Christ, the God-Man, who once walked on earth, who is now in heaven at the right hand of his Father, and who will come again at the end of the world to judge the living and the dead. He assures us of this most emphatically, saying: "Take ye and eat, this is my body." This has been taught by the holy Catholic Church for the last eighteen hundred years. Our senses may show us only bread in holy communion, but we must not doubt for a moment that this bread is not bread, but God made man, and we must believe this with a stronger faith than if we were to see him present before us, for our eyes could sooner deceive us than our holy faith. When St. Thomas of Aquin felt his end approach, he urgently asked for the holy sacraments. In order to receive the holy Viaticum, he wished to be laid upon ashes, and upon this couch of humility he made an act of faith in the Real Presence of Jesus in the most holy Sacrament, saying: "I firmly believe that Jesus Christ is present, true God and true man, in this sublime Sacrament. I adore thee, O my God and and Saviour; I receive thee, who art the price of my redemption and the viaticum of my pilgrimage."

Make as often as you go to holy communion an act of faith in the Real Presence of Jesus in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar, saying with Peter: "Thou art the Son of the living God." If you are animated with such a living faith, you will, with the centurion in the gospel, most profoundly humble yourself, and with reverence say: "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed."

2. *Hope.* He who firmly believes that Jesus Christ is truly present in the Blessed Eucharist places all his hope in him, and expects from him all good things. Faith tells us that Christ is present, who in his earthly life gave numberless proofs of his love for men, who fed the hungry, healed the sick, raised the dead, showed mercy to sinners, and shed his blood for us all on

the cross; who now, in heaven, at the right hand of his Father, is our mediator and advocate, and who does everything for us in order to save us; who, to-day, as well as eighteen hundred years ago, invites us all to come to him: "Come to me all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you."—*Matt.* 11: 28. Who would not go to the altar with great confidence? If we are only free from mortal sin, if we only detest all sins from the bottom of our heart, and are sincere, we may hope from him every blessing. He has his hands full of graces and is ready to give to every one as much as he desires.

When about to go to holy communion, excite yourselves to great confidence in Jesus, and say: "O my Jesus, I am a great sinner, and am not worthy to loose the latchet of thy shoe, much less to receive thee into my heart, but thy goodness and mercy give me courage and make me hope with confidence for every blessing from thee. O Jesus thou canst and wilt give me everything that is necessary and salutary for me; let thy omnipotence make me what I must become, that I may die to the world and live to thee alone."

3. *Charity.* This is the most necessary and most pleasing virtue that could adorn our heart in holy communion. It was a great, nay, an incomprehensible love that impelled Jesus, the only-begotten Son of God, to become man and walk upon earth for thirty-three years in the form of a servant; but still greater and more incomprehensible must his love appear when we contemplate him in the Blessed Eucharist. Whilst sojourning on earth he concealed only his Divinity; he appeared as man, but here he veils even his humanity, and shows himself to us only in the form of a little wafer of bread. After his Incarnation he remained thirty-three years upon earth and then returned to his heavenly Father; but in the most holy Eucharist he will remain till the end of time, so that it is literally true: "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."—*Matt.* 28: 20. While on earth he did good to all and bestowed great benefits on men; he even died for them on the cross; but here he goes still further; he gives himself to us and gives us everything he has. Oh! who can comprehend this love? How enraptured were the saints when they contemplated this love of Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist! When St. Philip Neri saw the priest bringing him the holy Viaticum, he exclaimed: "Behold my love, behold my love! Oh, give me my love!"

Before you approach the holy altar, consider for a few moments the infinite love which Jesus manifests to us in the Blessed Eucharist, and ponder on these questions. *Who is coming? To whom does he come? How does he come? Why does he come?* If you reflect on these questions, the fire of charity will be enkindled in

your hearts for him who out of love for you has humbled himself by taking the form of bread, and who unites himself most intimately with you, in order to make you participate in his divine nature.

PERORATION.

I conclude this instruction with the earnest wish that at this holy season of Easter you may all receive holy communion worthily. Cleanse your heart from every mortal sin. Oh, that there may be none among you who will dare receive holy communion in the state of mortal sin! Cleanse your heart as much as possible from venial sins. The means by which you can do so is confession. Take all possible pains to make a good one, that you may receive holy communion worthily. Before communion make acts of faith, hope, and charity, or the love of God, for these three virtues are to Jesus the most acceptable ornaments of your souls. After such a preparation approach the altar with confidence, and you will obtain grace and life everlasting. Amen.



EASTER SUNDAY.

EPISTLE. (*I. Cor.* 5: 7, 8.) Brethren: Purge out the old leaven, that you may be new paste, as you are unleavened. For Christ our pasch is sacrificed. Therefore, let us feast, not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

1. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

HOW AND WHY WE ARE TO KEEP EASTER.

The Apostles had a great desire to keep the pasch with Christ, their divine Master. They therefore came to him, saying: "Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the pasch."—*Matt.* 26: 17. And Christ having appointed the place, they joyfully went and prepared the pasch and ate it with him. From the very beginning of Christianity Easter has been a most beautiful and joyous time for all faithful disciples of our Lord, for all good Christians. Therefore the Apostle says in the epistle of to-day: *Let us feast.* And as it is not enough merely to keep Easter, but all depends on our keeping it in the right way, the Apostle tells us how we are to keep it.

Let us meditate on the contents of the epistle for this day, and answer the two following questions:

I. Why are we to keep Easter?
II. How are we to keep Easter?

PART I.

We keep Easter on account of Christ, who, as the Apostle says in the epistle, was immolated as our pasch.

1. The pasch which the Jews celebrated under the Old Law had reference to ours.

You know that God inflicted sundry plagues upon Pharao and all Egypt, to compel him to let the Israelites go out of the country, and, lastly, all the first-born males of men and beasts were slain in one night by the angel of God. But the Israelites, who, at the command of God, killed a lamb, and with its blood sprinkled the lintels and door-posts of their houses, were preserved from this terrible calamity; the angel, seeing the posts and lintels sprinkled with the blood of the lamb, passed by their houses. The lamb was to be broiled and eaten by the Jews, and on account of their speedy departure, in a standing posture, with their shoes on their feet, their loins girt, and staves in their hands. In memory of these events, they were obliged to celebrate the pasch every year in the same way as they had celebrated it immediately before their departure from Egypt. The feast of the pasch began on the fourteenth day of the month Nisan, which corresponds to the second half of the month of March and the first half of April, and lasted seven days.

2. Our Christian Easter was prefigured by the Jewish pasch, for, as the Jews celebrated their pasch in remembrance of their deliverance from the servitude of Egypt, so we celebrate our Easter in memory of our liberation from the slavery of sin and Satan; for at this season Christ accomplished the work of our Redemption. The principal part of the celebration of the Jewish pasch consisted in this, that every family was obliged to kill and eat a lamb. This paschal lamb was a type of our Easter Lamb, Jesus Christ, who has been immolated for us. The paschal lamb of the Jews was to be *without blemish;* Jesus Christ is without spot or sin, "for it was fitting that we should have such a high-priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens."—*Heb.* 7: 26. The lamb was to be *slaughtered;* Christ was slaughtered on the cross as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. Not a bone of the lamb should be broken; not a bone of the crucified Saviour was broken, as was usually done with those who were crucified. The blood of the lamb with which the Israelites sprinkled the door-posts, caused the angel not to enter their houses, but *to pass by, sparing them;* so the blood of Christ is the *price of our Redemption and of our rescue from eternal death.* The Jews were *to eat* the slaughtered and broiled lamb; we also receive Christ, the Lamb immolated on the cross, in holy communion. The uncircumcised and strangers were not allowed to participate in eating the paschal lamb, but only the Jews, and of them only those who were *legally clean;* so

also only the faithful who are *free from every grievous sin* are allowed to approach the table of the Lord.

3. The Easter which we keep every year has reference to our Paschal Lamb, Christ, who was immolated.

(*a.*) Easter is the time when Christ, the Lamb of God, *offered himself for us on the cross.* Could we let it pass by without calling to mind this great sacrifice for our Redemption, and without thanking our Redeemer for the superabundant love which constrained him to suffer and to die for us? What kind of Christians must we be if we do not celebrate this sacrifice of love every year at least with a grateful remembrance?

(*b.*) Easter is the time *of his glorious Resurrection.* Our dear Lord had appeared upon earth in the greatest poverty and lowliness; his whole life here below was nothing but an unbroken series of tribulations, persecutions, and sufferings; and at last he died a most ignominious and painful death on the cross. But how everything was changed after his Resurrection; his humiliation was transformed into exaltation, his contumely into glory; his suffering into heavenly beatitude; and his death into live everlasting, because "he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross; for which cause God also hath exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above all names: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father."—*Phil.* 2: 9-11.

(*c.*) Easter is the time *during which our divine Lord accomplished the work of our Redemption.* If the Jews celebrated their pasch every year in grateful remembrance of their deliverance from their slavery in Egypt, how much more reason have we to celebrate our Easter, since Jesus Christ freed us from the worst kind of slavery that can be imagined, from the slavery of sin and Satan, blotted out our guilt, reconciled us with our Creator, and made us children of God and heirs of heaven. How could we, even if we contemplate only superficially the unspeakable grace of our Redemption, allow Easter to pass by without celebrating it with an equally thankful and joyous heart?

(*d.*) Easter, finally, is the time *during which we are reminded of our own resurrection.* "By a man came death, and by a man the resurrection of the dead; and as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive."—*I. Cor.* 15: 21, 22. Christ merited the grace for us, that we shall one day, like himself, come forth from

the grave with glorified bodies, and with our body and soul enjoy the everlasting felicity of heaven.

PART II.

The Apostle tells us in the lesson for this Sunday *how we are to keep Easter*, exhorting us to purge out the old leaven, that we may become a new paste, adding, by way of explanation: *Therefore, let us feast, not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

1. The first thing that we are obliged to do at this holy time is to *purge out the old leaven, the leaven of malice and wickedness.*

(*a.*) The *old leaven* that is to be purged out, is *sin.* Sin is justly designated as a leaven, for as leaven penetrates and ferments a whole mass of flour, so sin penetrates the whole man and corrupts all the powers of soul and body. It corrupts the understanding by darkening it; the memory and the faculty of imagination by filling it with impure representations; the will by weakening it, and inclining it to evil. It corrupts the body with its senses by abusing it as an instrument for evil, and bringing upon it countless evils, sickness, pain, and finally death. It is sin that destroys all supernatural merits; for he that commits a mortal sin immediately loses all the merits for heaven which he had acquired, and can do nothing meritorious for eternal life so long as he continues in sin.

(*b.*) The Apostle designates the leaven as a *leaven of malice and wickedness.* There is always a great *malice* in sin, for it is a rebellion against God, the Lord of heaven and earth, a base ingratitude towards him, our most kind Father and greatest benefactor, and in particular a shocking infidelity towards Jesus, our most loving Redeemer. There is also *wickedness* in sin, for he who allows himself to be governed by it, deceives himself and others; himself, because he makes a false conscience for himself and tries to excuse his sinful life by advancing various futile reasons; others, because he presents the good side, and frequently, under the appearance of rectitude, injures them in regard to their temporal and spiritual affairs.

(*c.*) The Apostle, in saying that we should purge out the leaven of malice and wickedness, refers by this expression to the Jewish pasch. The Jews were not allowed during the seven days of their pasch to eat anything leavened. The transgression of this law was punished with death. "Seven days there shall not

be found any leaven in your houses; he that shall eat leavened bread, his soul shall perish out of the assembly of Israel."—*Ex.* 12: 19. Before the beginning of the pasch the Jews were obliged to remove all leavened bread, and to search carefully to see that there was nothing with leaven in it, and to sweep and purge, as it were, the whole house, that nothing leavened might remain. In like manner, according to the admonition of the Apostle, we remove out of our hearts everything that is sinful, so that they become clean, like a vessel that is cleaned with all diligence. And by what means is this accomplished? The means which the Church offers us at this holy time, nay, imposes upon us as a duty, is the *Sacrament of Penance.* If we receive this Sacrament worthily, we shall be cleansed from all stains, according to the word of Christ: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven." There is leaven in the hearts of all. Some are infected with grievous sins. Easter, perhaps, has come and gone frequently, and yet they have not purged out the leaven of sin. They have not been to confession, or have made an unworthy one. Oh, that they would avail themselves of the present time to make a contrite and sincere confession, in order to purge the leaven of malice and wickednes out of their hearts! Others have, if not mortal, at least venial sins upon their conscience; they also must endeavor by a good confession to cleanse themselves from all their sins and faults.

2. The second thing that must be done is to become a new paste and *keep Easter with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

(*a.*) By the leavened bread the Apostle understands an immoral life. But purity of morals does not consist only in being free from every sin, mortal and venial, and from every voluntary inclination to sin, but also in practicing the opposite virtues. When Christ calls the clean of heart blessed, those are to be understood who, on the one hand, detest from their heart and avoid every sin, and on the other, love and practice everything that pleases God. Purity of morals, therefore, is nothing else than Christian justice, which consists in avoiding evil and doing good. He who does no evil, but omits the good which he could and should do, is not among the servants of God who have a claim to eternal beatitude; to him, on the contrary, these words apply: "Every tree, therefore, that doth not yield good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire."—*Matt.* 3: 10. "To him who knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin."—*James* 4: 17.

(*b.*) By the unleavened bread the Apostle understands *true justice* which stands not only before men, but also before God.

Above all, the heart must be right, for if everything is not right in the heart, it is only exterior justice, mere show and delusion. The Scribes and Pharisees knew how to give their justice so captivating an appearance that they were viewed as saints by the people, and yet Christ declares: "Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."—*Matt.* 5: 20. The Scribes and Pharisees were just exteriorly and in the eyes of the world, but their hearts were full of malice; such passions as ambition and pride, envy and desire of revenge, hatred and enmity, impurity and adultery, were harbored there. For this reason he compares them to "whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all filthiness."—*Matt.* 23: 27. It would be a fatal self-delusion to content yourselves with a so-called worldly honesty, without troubling yourselves about interior justice; outward justice and honesty, without the interior, is nothing but sanctimoniousness and hypocrisy. True justice, pleasing to God, requires all our actions and good works to be referred to God, and that in all things and everywhere we seek the honor and glory of God. The greatest and most heroic virtues, when they have their foundation in ambition and pride, are worthless before God and without fruit and merit for heaven. Hence the admonition of Christ: "Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them, otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father who is in heaven."—*Matt.* 6: 1.

PERORATION.

Let us then feast, not with the old leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. The most important business for you at Easter must be to make a good confession, that you may cleanse yourselves from all your sins, obtain God's grace and love, and worthily receive holy communion. After that, persevere steadfastly in the service of God, that you may preserve the grace obtained, and may one day be deemed worthy to celebrate Easter in heaven. Amen.

EASTER SUNDAY.

GOSPEL. *Mark* 16: 1-7. At that time: Mary Magdalen and Mary the mother of James and Salome, bought sweet spices, that coming, they might anoint Jesus. And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came to the sepulchre, the sun being now risen. And they said one to another. Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And looking, they saw the stone rolled back, for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed with a white robe, and they were affrighted. Who saith to them: Be not affrighted, you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified: he is risen, he is not here, behold the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there you shall see him, as he told you.

2. HOMILETIC SKETCH.

THE APPARITION OF AN ANGEL TO THE WOMEN WHO VISIT THE SEPULCHRE OF OUR LORD.

Our Lord frequently foretold, both to his friends and his enemies, that he would rise from the dead on the third day. "From that time Jesus began to show to his disciples, that he must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the ancients and the Scribes and the chief priests, and be put to death, and the third day rise again."—*Matt.* 16: 21. "As Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights, so shall the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights."—*Matt.* 12: 40. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."—*John* 2: 19. That Christ spoke the truth this day proves. His sacred body had been taken down from the cross on Friday evening and laid in the sepulchre; the Jews had sealed the grave and for greater security placed guards around it, so that no one could steal the body and say that Jesus had risen from the dead. The morning of Easter Sunday had not yet dawned when Christ came forth from the grave. The soldiers who guarded the sepulchre were the first witnesses of his glorious Resurrection.

The gospel of this day speaks of this important and joyful mystery of our faith, which treats—

I. Of the visit to the sepulchre by the women;
II. Of the apparition of an angel.

PART I.

1. The gospel relates that *Mary Magdalen and Mary the mother of James and Salome, bought sweet spices, that coming, they might anoint Jesus.*

(*a.*) Let us first consider the women who are mentioned in this record. Mary Magdalen was once a great sinner, but bewailing her sins at the feet of Christ with tears of true contrition, she obtained the forgiveness of them.—*Luke* 7: 37, etc. After her conversion she was filled with love and gratitude towards Christ, zealously listened to his instructions, stood with Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with John, under the cross on Calvary, and was the first whom the risen Saviour favored with his appearance. What a consoling example is Mary Magdalen for penitent Christians of all times. Though they may have frequently and grievously sinned, yet if they truly repent Jesus loves them as much—nay, even more than those souls who have not greatly sinned, but are not particularly zealous in his service. Mary, the mother of James, the Less and the wife of Cleophas, was a cousin of the Blessed Virgin, and a faithful companion of Christ, and her son James was one of his Apostles. Mary Salome, the wife of Zebedee and mother of the two Apostles, James the Elder and John, also adhered to Christ with all fidelity.—*Matt.* 27: 56. According to St. Luke (24: 10), Joanna, the wife of Chusa, King Herod's steward, was with the three women here mentioned. There were others present also, whose names are not mentioned.

All these women were followers of Jesus, contributed to his support out of their substance, according to their ability, adhered to him with affectionate love and did not forsake him even on his way to death. They showed themselves more zealous, more faithful, and more persevering than the Apostles and other adherents of Christ who abandoned him at his passion and death for fear of the Jews, and dared not show themselves publicly, much less visit the sepulchre. It is so to-day. There it more devotion, more piety, and more Christian zeal and sentiment among women than among men. Thus the women, by their good example, religious sentiment, and especially by the religious training of their children, are called upon to repair the injury which Eve, the first woman, caused in the world. Oh, that all women would comply with their vocation with zeal and perseverance.

(*b.*) It is said that these women bought spices, that they might anoint the body of Jesus.

With the exception of Mary Magdalen, all these women were poor: they belonged to the poor and were obliged to earn their bread by manual labor. Still, they bought spices with their savings, in order to do an act of charity towards their Saviour and to anoint his body. What a noble, generous love! Let us imitate these women by cheerfully contributing towards the adorning of the house of God and the relief of the poor, especially of such as are sick.

They bought spices, not for themselves, but for Christ, that they might anoint his sacred body. How many are there who expend large sums of money for their corruptible body, for furniture, clothes, and pleasure, but who hardly ever give anything for the glory of God, the good of religion, and other pious purposes, or who, perhaps, with Judas, say: "To what purpose is this waste?"—*Matt.* 26: 8.

2. *Very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came to the sepulchre, the sun being now risen.*

(*a.*) The first day of the week was Easter Sunday. Why did the women not go on Saturday to the grave, but on Sunday, since their love for him allowed not a moment's delay? From conscientiousness in the observance of the precept of the Sabbath, on which day the Jews were not allowed to make a long journey, or do any servile work. This should be a lesson to us to abstain from all servile work on Sundays and holidays, to keep all the commandments of God conscientiously, and to omit even good works which are not commanded, if we can not perform them without violating the duties of our state of life or of religion. True, genuine piety requires that we do the good which is commanded, and then that which is recommended and voluntary; that we fulfil first the duties of justice, and after that the duties of charity. Alas! many invert the order established by God.

(*b.*) The women must have started very early on their way, for they were at the sepulchre at sunrise. This is an admonition for you to rise early on Sundays and holidays that you may do any necessary work and not be late for church through your own fault. The love of Jesus, as well as the desire to pay homage to him must prompt you to hasten, so that you may be too early for mass rather than too late. In a spiritual sense the example of the women teaches us that we should dedicate the first part of our life, our childhood and youth, and the first part of every day, the morning, to the service of God. If some must acknowledge

that they have spent the years of their childhood and youth in levity and forgetfulness of God, they should now at least devote the rest of their life with the greater zeal to his service, in order to redeem the lost time and to repair their neglect. And if many have devoted the first thoughts and actions of the day to the world and the things of the world, let them resolve from this day forward to direct their first thoughts to God and the business of their salvation, and never to omit their morning prayers.

3. On their way to the sepulchre they said one to another: *Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And looking they saw the stone rolled back, for it was very great.*

(*a.*) The women did not think of the stone at first, not until they were on their way to the sepulchre. This frequently occurs in good undertakings; we do not at first discover the obstacles in the way but only later on. Like the women, we must not be deterred from a good work but continue it with confidence; God will help us. It is a well known fact that the evil spirit, the world, and the flesh put various stones in the way, but we must not on that account lose our courage, for "God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able, but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it."—*I. Cor.* 10: 13.

(*b.*) St. Matthew tells us (28: 2.) how the stone was removed from the sepulchre: "And behold, there was a great earthquake. For an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and coming, rolled back the stone, and sat upon it." We must not think that the angel removed the stone from the entrance to the sepulchre so that Christ could come forth from it. According to the doctrine of all the Fathers of the Church, he had risen before the grave was opened; the angel merely rolled back the stone, and opened it to show that his Resurrection had taken place. Thus divine Providence supports constancy and confidence. By an earthquake the stone is flung from the entrance of the sepulchre, and the guards, who might have hindered the women in their pious work, take to flight. Thus wonderfully does God aid his servants who ardently long for him. He removes the obstacles which come from men and circumstances, and drives the devil, our arch-enemy, away. Therefore always trust in God, who strengthens the weak, and never forsakes us, if in every peril we have recourse to him.

PART II.

I. The women had arrived at the sepulchre. As the stone was rolled back they entered. The sepulchre was not like our graves, a perpendicular opening into the earth, but it was an excavation in the side of the rock and had an opening through which one could enter as into a room. *And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side clothed with a white robe, and they were affrighted.*

(*a.*) The young man was an angel.—*Matt.* 28: 2. "An angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and coming, rolled back the stone, and sat upon it." The angel appears in the form of a young man, as a sign that in heaven everything is young, beautiful, and joyous, and that the saints on the last day will rise as youths, full of strength and beauty, like unto Christ. What comfort for all pious Christians who have a body afflicted with numerous infirmities!

(*c.*) The angel *sat*, as a sign that the blessed in heaven enjoy we must have the white garment of innocence and purity, if we wish to go to heaven, since nothing that is defiled can enter into the city of God.—*Apoc.* 21: 27. White is the color of joy; the angel appeared in a white robe to indicate that the Resurrection of Christ is a joyous festival for the angels in heaven, as for men upon earth.

(*c.*) The angel *sat*, as a sign that he blessed in heaven enjoy eternal rest; he sat on the *right hand*, because he was a good angel, for the good angels, with the elect, will stand on the right hand at the general judgment, whilst the devils, with the reprobate, will stand on the left. Where shall we stand? On the right hand, or on the left? The answer is plain: Where we now stand.

(*d.*) That the women were astonished at the sight of the angel need not surprise us. How can man, in his weakness and misery, help being afraid and astonished when he comes in contact with a heavenly being? Even Mary trembled when the angel entered her chamber to announce to her the heavenly message. Oh, that a holy tremor may always seize us when we enter a church, in which Jesus Christ is really present in the Blessed Sacrament, and may this be the case still more when we receive him in holy communion.

2. The angel calmed the women, saying to them: *Be not affrighted; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified; he is risen, he is not here; behold the place were they laid him.*

(*a.*) Those who seek Jesus have no reason to fear. The pious women were mourning his death; now they are filled with consolation and what they saw and heard causes them heavenly joy. Happy the souls who seek the Crucified by detaching their hearts from the world by humility and penance! Blessed are they who follow him even to the grave by dying to their sins and passions. They will have no reason to fear their risen God when the angel shall announce him as their Judge.

(*b.*) The angel announces to the women the Resurrection of Christ and gives a convincing proof of it, saying: *He is not here.* We also must give this proof of our spiritual resurrection. If we can say with truth: *I am not here;* I am free from this sin, from this evil inclination, habit, or occasion, free from my former tepidity, then we are spiritually risen. Let us rejoice if it be so. If it be not, let us labor that it may be. Let us take care lest our zeal for penance resemble a fire of straw, which blazes up quickly, but equally as quickly is extinguished. Our amendment must be permanent, we must diminish our old faults with the greatest care, and not allow our zeal for virtue to be extinguished. Let us for this end avail ourselves of the suitable means, namely, the frequent renewal of our good resolutions and prayer.

3. Lastly, the angel commissions the women to announce the Resurrection of Christ to his disciples, especially to Peter, and to tell them that he goes before them into Galilee, and that there they shall see him, as he told them.

(*a.*) The disciples, who had abandoned our Lord so shamefully, really did not deserve to have such happy tidings brought to them. But Christ did not consider what they deserved, but what his love demanded. He loves those who do not deserve it. What consolation for us who are so unworthy of the love of Jesus. Oh, that he may not enter into judgment with us, but treat us according to the multitude of his mercies! May he be merciful to us, in life and death, and on the day of judgment! But, that we may render ourselves worthy of his grace and mercy, let us devote our life to penitential exercises and good works.

(*b.*) Peter is mentioned by name; this is a proof of the regard and love which our divine Saviour entertained towards the Apostle. Peter is the Prince of the Apostles, and as such Christ especially honored him. Peter had loved Christ more than the other Apostles; therefore Christ showed a particular love for him. Peter ceased not to bewail his sins; therefore our Lord wished, by a special sign of his love, to console him. Since Christ

honors Peter on account of his prerogative, we should honor our superiors, on account of their position, even if they have faults. Since Christ, on account of his greater love, gives him a special proof of his love, we should give God special proof of our love and render ourselves worthy of his love. Since Peter, on account of his sincere repentance and his subsequent life-long penance, was so highly favored, should we not be sorry for our sins and endeavor to expiate them by penitential exercises in order to find grace with God?

PERORATION.

As the angel announced to the women, so I have announced to you to-day the Resurrection of Christ. Rejoice over this most important and consoling mystery of our holy religion, upon which rest our faith and hope, and profit by it, so that at this holy time of Easter you may celebrate your spiritual resurrection. Remain no longer in the grave of sin, of inordinate inclinations and passions. Come forth by a true conversion to God; walk in the life of grace, and "seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God."—*Col.* 3: 1.

EASTER SUNDAY.

3. DOGMATICAL SKETCH.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified; he is risen, he is not here.—Mark 16: 6.

The days of mourning and grief are past, and have given place to days of joy. Every Christian heart, full of holy joy, joins in the Alleluias. Our divine Saviour, who three days ago died in unutterable pain and ignominy on the cross, is gloriously risen from the dead. The pious women, who went early in the morning to embalm his body, are the first to receive the joyful tidings of his Resurrection. Entering into the sepulchre, they behold an angel, who says to them: *You seek Jesus of Nazareth,*

who was crucified; he is risen, he is not here. What the angel announced to the women I shall also announce to you to-day. I shall speak of the Resurrection of our Lord, that fundamental truth of our holy faith, and explain to you—

I. That Jesus is risen;
II. How he rose.

PART I.

Jesus is risen from the dead; the witnesses of this fact are—

1. *His apostles and disciples.* They gave testimony of it before Jews and Gentiles, before the high and the low, the learned and the unlearned, friends, and enemies, and not only occasionally, but they continually referred to it, and made it the foundation of Christianity. "If Christ be not risen again, your faith is vain, for you are yet in your sins. Then they also who have slept in Christ have perished."—*I. Cor.* 15: 17, 18. The evidence of the Apostles deserves to be firmly believed, for—

(*a.*) *They were not deceived.* If the risen Christ had appeared only to one or two of them, or only to a few women, they might have been deceived; but he appeared to all during the forty days he remained on earth, frequently held long conversations with them, gave them several instructions and commissions, showed them the print of his wounds, permitted them to touch him, and sat at the table and ate with them.—*Luke* 24: 36-43; *John* 21: 15, etc. As St. Paul narrates, he once appeared to five hundred disciples at once.—*I. Cor.* 15: 6. How could they be deceived? The Apostles were anything but credulous; on the contrary, they were so incredulous and hard of heart that Christ "upbraided them with their incredulity and hardness of heart, because they did not believe them who had seen him after he was risen again."—*Mark* 16: 14. Who could entertain for a moment the opinion that the Apostles might have been deceived?

(*b.*) *Nor would they deceive others.* This contradicts their character, for everywhere they proved themselves to be frank, open, simple, sincere men; nothing was more foreign to them than dissimulation, ambiguity, and falsehood. If we are to suppose that they had deceived us, some advantage should have accrued to them, for nobody tells a lie in such an important matter for nothing. What advantage did their evidence as to the Resurrec-

tion of Christ bring them? Not the slightest. This testimony, on the contrary, earned for them only hatred, contumely, persecution, sufferings and death. Judge for yourselves. Would not the Apostles have been insane, if, for the sake of a lie, they had chosen a life of tribulation, persecution, and suffering? Where is there a man in the whole world who tells a lie with the intention of drawing persecutions, sufferings, and death upon himself?

(*c.*) *They could not deceive, even if they would.* Where did they announce the Resurrection of Christ? In Jerusalem, in the land of the Jews, the theatre of his actions and sufferings. Who were the men to whom they preached the Resurrection of Christ? The high-priests, the Scribes and Pharisees, and the Jews in general, who had an accurate knowledge of Christ, and knew precisely what occurred during the last days of his life. When did they announce the Resurrection of Christ? It was only a few weeks after his death, on the Day of Pentecost. If the Apostles had really invented the Resurrection of Christ, would not all Jerusalem, have risen against them and branded them as the most shameless impostors? But no one did this, not even his most inveterate enemies, the Scribes and Pharisees, and the Jewish priesthood. The evidence, then, of the Apostles in bearing testimony to the Resurrection of Christ is absolutely incontrovertible and could only be contested out of malice or from the want of common sense.

2. *His enemies.* First, the Roman soldiers who guarded the sepulchre, and who reported the great miracle of the Resurrection of Christ to the high-priests. Their testimony is deserving of all credit, for the soldiers had no reason for telling a lie; it certainly must have been very humiliating to them to give this testimony, for in doing so they ran the risk of a court-martial, which might have resulted in their instant death.

The next witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus are the *high-priests.* When the soldiers reported that Christ was risen, they did not contradict them, but confirmed their report by giving them a sum of money, and saying to them: "Say you, his disciples came by night, and stole him away when we were asleep."—*Matt.* 28: 13. Would they have had recourse to such dishonorable means, if they had not firmly believed his Resurrection? If there had been the slightest doubt about the soldiers' account would they not have reported the case to Pilate, and insisted upon an investigation and the punishment of the soldiers?

Even the shameless lie of the bribed soldiers that the disciples of Christ came and stole his body when they were asleep, gives

evidence of his Resurrection. If the soldiers were asleep, how could they know that the disciples stole the body? Could they hear or see what occurred whilst they were asleep? How could it be thought possible that of all the sleeping guards not even one was awakened by the noise made by rolling back the heavy stone? Finally, who could believe that the disciples, who were so timid during his passion and at his death, would on a sudden display the daring courage required to enable them to perform so perilous a deed as that of stealing the body of Christ?

3. *The whole Christian universe.* The Apostles and their successors preached, not only in Jerusalem and Judea, but throughout the whole world, that Christ had died on the cross for the Redemption of mankind, and had risen again from the dead on the third day. And the Jews and Gentiles were convinced of this truth, and believed. And this belief has now existed more than eighteen hundred years and is spread over all the earth. How would it be possible for the belief in the Resurrection of our Lord to rest on error? If the Jews and Gentiles had not been completely convinced of the truth of this mystery, what would have induced them to embrace Christianity, which condemned their vices, and imposed self-denial, abnegation, and the mortification of the flesh upon them as a strict duty, and held out to them nothing in this life but contempt, persecution, and sufferings of every sort? Moreover, not only the Apostles, but also their successors, and the Christians of all centuries, have confirmed by countless miracles the testimony that Jesus has truly risen from the dead. What would follow, if they had been deceived or deceivers? Manifestly this, that God himself has led men into a great error, and kept them in it for more than eighteen hundred years. Would not such an inference be the greatest blasphemy? Jesus, therefore, is truly risen from the dead.

PART II.

Christ raised himself—

1. *By his own power.* All men will indeed rise out of their graves on the last day, yet not by their own power, but by the omnipotence of God. Not so Jesus Christ. With the same divine power that called back to life the youth of Naim, the daughter of Jairus, and Lazarus, he reunited his soul with his own body, which was lying dead in the grave, and raised it up to life. He expresses this truth in the words: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."—*John* 2: 19. And more emphati-

cally still in these: "I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself, and I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again."—*John* 10: 17, 18.

The raising of the Son is sometimes in the Sacred Scriptures attributed to the Father. Thus St. Paul says: "God the Father, who raised him (the Son) from the dead."—*Gal.* 1: 1. But we must not infer from this that Christ did not raise himself from the dead by his own power. Because the Son is of the same essence with the Father, the divine power by which the Son raised himself from the dead may be called the power of the Father, and consequently the raising of Jesus Christ is a work of the Father.

2. *With a glorious body*, as the Apostle says: "Our Lord Jesus Christ will reform the body of our lowness, made like the body of his glory."—*Phil.* 3: 21. The sacred body of Christ was the same as before the Resurrection, but it was now in a more glorious state than before, and had qualities which it did not previously possess. These qualities are—

(*a.*) *Brightness.* A wonderful transformation in the body of Jesus took place on Mount Thabor: "His face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as snow,"—*Matt.* 17: 2. This transfiguration of Christ, which upon Thabor was only transient and partial, after his Resurrection became permanent and general; not only his face, but his whole body was diffusing a much brighter and more resplendent sparkling light than the noonday sun. If in his apparitions he had not suppressed the rays which ever streamed forth from his glorified body the disciples would not have been able to endure the sight.

(*b.*) The *incapability of suffering and death—impassibility.* Christ at his Incarnation had assumed a true human body; his body, as that of every other man, was capable of suffering. And in his earthly life he really suffered hunger and thirst, heat and cold, fatigue and other inconveniences, and lastly a most painful death. After his Resurrection he was no longer susceptible of any painful sensation. Before his Resurrection his body was mortal, he could die a natural, a painful death; after it his body was immortal; as he could no longer suffer, so he could die no more. Therefore the Apostle writes: "We know that Christ, rising again from the dead, dieth now no more; death shall no more have dominion over him."—*Rom.* 6: 9.

(*c.*) *Agility.* The body of Christ is no longer confined by space and time, being without weight or heaviness. No time was needed to go to any place, it could pass in a moment through the immense space of creation and be at any spot it wished.

(*d.*) *Subtility.* The body of Christ remained after his Resurrection a true body, but it laid aside all density, so that, like a pure spirit, it could penetrate everywhere and render itself invisible to the eyes of men. Hence he came forth from the grave without breaking the seal which the Jews had fixed upon it; hence he also appeared to his disciples, the doors being shut, and disappeared suddenly after every apparition.

All these qualities of the glorified body of Christ, only in a less degree, the bodies of the just will possess when they rise from the death. This should be a powerful incentive for us to hold our body and its senses in honor, and to employ them for the service of God.

3. He retained in his glorified body the marks of his sufferings, viz., in his hands, feet, and side the marks of his wounds; therefore he said to Thomas: "Put in thy finger hither (into the place of the nails), and see my hands, and bring hither thy hand, and put it into my side."

Jesus retained the marks of the wounds in his body—

(*a.*) *To give us a palpable proof of his Resurrection.* If he had appeared without the marks of his wounds, persons might have been led to believe that it was only his spirit clothed in an apparent body. But showing himself with the marks of his wounds, no one could doubt that he was truly risen, as we see in the case of Thomas. "Happy marks of the wounds," says St. Bernard, which attest the truth of the Resurrection and the Divinity of Christ."

(*b.*) *For a sign of his victory over death and hell.* The glorious wounds of his body are so many tokens of mankind redeemed, of heaven reopened, and hell conquered, as the scars and wounds received in battle are signs of undaunted courage, and the hero's proudest decoration.

(*c.*) *In order by them to move his heavenly Father to mercy towards us.* If God at the sight of the many-colored rainbow remembers the promise which he made to men, that the waters of a flood

should never again destroy all flesh (*Gen.* 9; 12-16), how much more will he restrain his wrath when he sees his beloved Son adorned with the precious wounds which he received for our Redemption. We must not therefore lose courage on account of our sins; the marks of the wounds of Christ cry louder for mercy than our sins for vengeance.

(*d.*) *In order to show them on the day of judgment for the consolation of the just and the terror of the wicked.* At the sight of the five wounds of Jesus, the just will experience an unspeakable consolation, for these wounds represent to them the boundless love of the heavenly Father, who gave his only-begotten Son for their Redemption, and the equally great love of Jesus, who shed the last drop of his blood for them. They will also bring to their mind all the graces which they received for their salvation and zealously made use of, the victories which they gained over the world, the flesh, and the devil, the virtues which they practiced, and the sufferings which they endured with so perfect a patience. They will behold in the marks of the holy wounds of Christ the pledge of salvation; therefore at the sight of them their hearts will be full of consolation and joy. But the reprobate will be seized with terror and consternation, for they will be constrained to say that they abused all the graces which Christ merited for them by his passion and death, and that by their vices and sins they have crucified him anew.

PERORATION.

That the wounds of Christ may not on the day of judgment be to you an object of consternation and terror, but a source of consolation and joy, renew to-day a firm resolution to lead a good, pious, Christian life. If heretofore you have defiled your conscience with various sins, cleanse it by a good confession, subdue your passions, mortify all inordinate inclinations, and remove everything displeasing to God. Be fervent in prayer, and practice, as far as you can, the Christian virtues. Walk constantly in the path of justice, that you may one day come forth from the grave with a glorified body and obtain in heaven the unfading palm of victory over the world, death, and hell. Amen.

EASTER SUNDAY.

4. LITURGICAL SKETCH.

THE CELEBRATION OF EASTER.

You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified; he is risen, he is not here—*Mark* 16: 6.

Jesus Christ, our Lord and Redeemer, is risen from the dead. This is the great, glorious mystery of this day's feast, which fills the heart of every believer with a holy joy. The Jews every year celebrated the pasch in grateful remembrance of their deliverance from the slavery of Egypt and the gracious exemption from death of their first-born. The Jewish pasch was a type of our Christian Easter. All men were languishing in the slavery of Satan, but God had compassion on them and sent them another Moses, his only-begotten Son, who broke their chains and set them free.—*Gal.* 4: 5. To-day, coming forth from the sepulchre, he has overcome Satan, demolished his dominion of four thousand years' duration, and purchased for us grace, liberty, and life. Who would not rejoice to-day? Who would not praise and glorify Christ, and exclaim with the Apostle: "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? Now the sting of death is sin: and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."—*I. Cor.* 15: 55-57.

That the significance of Easter may become more apparent to us, we shall consider how this feast is celebrated, namely—

I. The time of this celebration;
II. The peculiarities of it.

PART I.

With regard to the time of the celebration of Easter two questions are to be answered, namely, *When does it take place? and how long does it last?*

1. After an obstinate controversy of more than a hundred years between the East and the West the first General Council

of the Church, held in the year 325, at the city of Nice in Bithynia, decreed that Easter should every year be celebrated on the first Sunday following the full moon after the vernal equinox. In order, however, that we may be better understood, we must explain more fully.

By the vernal equinox we understand that day on which the sun crosses the equator in spring, and which, by the most careful observation and computation, was found at the time of the Council to have fallen on the 21st of March; hence if the full moon falls on the 22nd of March, and this 22nd of March is a Saturday, the next day will be the first Sunday after the full moon, and it will be Easter Sunday. But if the moon be full on the 20th of March, this will not be considered the Easter moon, but it will be the next full moon, twenty-nine days later, which will be on the 18th of April. Now, should this 18th of April be a Sunday, Easter would be the following Sunday, or the 25th of April. Easter, you see then, can be no earlier than the 23rd of March, nor later than the 25th of April. But though it may come earlier or later, it always falls, at least in our hemisphere, in the time of spring. This time is significant, and symbolizes very beautifully the mysteries of the Easter festival.

(*a.*) In winter the days are short and but feebly illumined by the sun; the wind is sharp and cold, everything is desolate and dead. This sad time of winter is an eloquent picture of the wretched condition of mankind before their Redemption. There was no knowledge of God any more upon earth; with the exception of the Jews, all nations were sunk in the most abominable idolatry; vice and abomination of every description overflowed the world and all the germs of spiritual life seemed to have died out. Behold the gloomy winter of the human race! Finally Christ appears, announces his heavenly doctrine, suffers and dies, rises from the dead and establishes his Church. Then everything assumes a more cheerful aspect; a light arises to men: they know how far they have erred from the way of truth and virtue; they are converted by the preaching of the Apostles, and embrace Chritianity. Behold the spring-time of grace which came to men through Christ, the risen Redeemer.

(*b.*) The Resurrection of Christ is the pledge of our future resurrection. "By a man came death, and by a man the resurrection of the dead. And as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive."—*I. Cor.* 15: 21, 22. At this holy time of Easter, seeing Christ triumph over death and the grave, we turn our gaze to the end of time and rejoice in the thought that we shall rise again and reign with our Saviour in heaven. Again, it is

spring-time that symbolizes this consoling truth, for in spring everything revives, grows, and blossoms; so our body will one day revive, be restored to youth, and come forth from the grave glorified and immortal.

(*c.*) At Easter we should celebrate our spiritual resurrection, according to the word of the Apostle: "We are buried together with him by baptism unto death; that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in the newness of life."—*Rom.* 6, 4. In order to rise to the life of grace, we must, according to the precept of the Church, go to confession and communion. Again, it is the spring-time that gives us a clear idea of this spiritual resurrection. As long as man continues in sin, he is dead, and resembles winter, which can bring forth no fruit. But if, animated by the ray of divine grace, he is truly converted, he resembles spring, which awakens nature from its deadly slumber and breathes new life into it. As spring disposes all to joy and hilarity, so the newly-converted Christian experiences joy in his interior, and enjoys heavenly peace. But as spring awakens nature from its torpidity and causes everything to blossom, but leaves the maturing of the fruits to summer and autumn, so a Christian at the beginning of his conversion is not yet perfect; the new grace must grow and come to perfection by degrees.

Thus, spring very beautifully symbolizes the mysteries which this time of Easter comprises. Let us here acknowledge the wisdom of the Church, which makes use of natural things to illustrate the mysteries of our holy religion and to educate us as pious Christians.

2. The ecclesiastical celebration includes not only Easter Sunday and Easter week, but comprises six weeks, lasting till Pentecost.

(*a.*) This prolonged celebration of Easter is on account of its importance, for it reminds us of the mystery which is the foundation of our faith and hope, that is, of the Resurrection of our Lord. If Christ had not risen from the dead, our faith would be destitute of the last sufficient proof of its truth and divinity, our prospect of eternity would be obscured, and our Redemption, so to speak, incomplete. "If Christ be not risen again, your faith is vain, for you are yet in your sins."—*I. Cor.* 15; 17.

But since Christ, as he often foretold, is risen again, the seal of divinity is stamped on our faith, our hope rests on an immovable rock, and the work of our Redemption is complete; and full

of joy we can exclaim with the royal prophet: "Our soul hath been delivered, as a sparrow out of the snare of the fowlers. The snare is broken, and we are delivered."—*Ps.* 123: 7.

(*b.*) The Church also endeavors to revive our Easter joy by the gospels of the six Sundays after Easter, in which she presents to us the graces and fruits of the Resurrection of Christ. In the gospel of the first Sunday after Easter, Christ risen gives his Apostles the power of forgiving sins, the Sacrament of Penance appearing as the first fruit of the Resurrection. In the gospel of the second Sunday Christ portrays himself as the good Shepherd of his sheep; his pastoral care for the faithful, the gradual propagation of his Church, and the blessings which he brings to all nations, appear as the second fruit. In the gospel for the third Sunday Christ speaks of the sufferings of his adherents, which are only momentary and end when the imperishable joys of heaven begin. The eternal beatitude after short sufferings is the third fruit. In the gospel of the fourth Sunday Jesus promises to send the Holy Ghost, and this is a further fruit of the Resurrection. In the gospel for the fifth Sunday Christ assures us that his heavenly Father will give us all that we shall ask in his name; the hearing of our prayer, then, is another fruit of the Resurrection. And lastly, in the gospel of the Sunday within the octave of the Ascension our Saviour renews the repeated promise that the Holy Ghost shall come: that he will guide the Church and preserve her to the end of time; thus the perpetuity of the Church through the Holy Ghost is also a fruit of the Resurrection of Jesus.

PART II.

The principal peculiarities of the Easter celebration are—

1. *The picture of the risen Saviour with a standard in his hand.* Christ fought with the powers of darkness as long as he sojourned on earth. When he died on the cross he seemed conquered; hell and its adherent exulted. But on the third day he comes forth from the grave glorious and triumphant over death and hell, the head of the old serpent is crushed, and mankind is redeemed. The standard in his right hand reminds us of this glorious victory of Christ. As often as we look at that picture we must heartily rejoice over the victory of our Lord, but also resolve courageously to fight against the enemies of our salvation, so that we may overcome them. "Blessed is the man that en-

dureth temptation, for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life."—*James* 1: 12.

2. *The Vidi aquam* which is chanted during Paschal time in place of *Asperges me*. The words *Vidi aquam* are taken from the Prophet Ezechiel (47) and are as follows: "I saw water coming forth from the temple, on the right side, Alleluia; and all to whom that water came were saved, and shall say, Alleluia." This mysterious water reminds us—

(*a*.) In general, of *all the graces which flow to us continually from the Holy Catholic Church*, and of which in Paschal time we think with heartfelt joy, because Christ at this time accomplished the work of our Redemption.

(*b*.) Especially of *Baptism*, by which we have been cleansed from all stains of sin and become children of God and heirs of heaven. The reason why we should call to mind at Easter the grace of Baptism is because in the first ages of the Church the solemn administration of Baptism took place at Easter and therefore baptismal water is still blessed on Holy Saturday.

(*c*.) *Of Easter confession and Easter communion*, by which we are again cleansed and sanctified. Let us thank God for this grace, praise and glorify him, and sing a joyful Alleluia. Perhaps there are some among us who, instead of the joyful *Vidi aquam*, should sing *Asperges me*. Oh, that by a worthy reception of the holy sacraments they would place themselves in the state of grace, that being spiritually risen they may sing the joyful *Vidi aquam!*

3. *The Alleluia*, which the Church during Easter time repeats continually. This Hebrew word means, "Praise the Lord," and is therefore an invitation to praise God for the benefits and graces which we have received. The Jews chanted the six Alleluias, that is, the six psalms of praise and thanksgiving of David, on their great festivals, in order to thank God for his graces, and to praise and glorify him. From them the word passed into the Church, and since the time of Pope Damasus (366) it has been in general use. We have far more reason than the Jews to sing Alleluia with joyful hearts; they were freed from the servitude of Pharao, we from the slavery of the devil; the Jews were conducted only to an earthly Chanaan, but we are called to the heavenly one, in which we shall reign for ever. But if we wish our Alleluia to please God, it must come not only from the mouth,

but from the heart; otherwise the word of the Lord will apply to us: "This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips glorify me, but their heart is far from me."—*Is.* 29: 13.

4. *The custom of standing at prayer,* as at the *Regina coeli,* said at this time instead of the *Angelus,* while at other seasons the kneeling posture is prescribed. This ecclesiastical ordinance reminds us—

(*a.*) Of the Resurrection of Christ, the memory of which we celebrate during the whole of Paschal time.

(*b.* Of our own resurrection, which is to be effected at this holy time, as well as of the duty of remaining in the state of grace, according to the word of the Apostle: "He that standeth, let him take heed lest he fall."—*I. Cor.* 10: 12.

(*c.*) Of the admonition of the Apostle: "If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth."—*Col.* 3: 1, 2. After Jesus has redeemed us from the slavery of sin and Satan, and called us to his service, we must not again attach our heart to the world and its vanities, but we must aspire to higher and better things that we may reach our eternal home.

5. The *Paschal candle,* which is blessed on Holy Saturday, placed at the gospel side of the high altar and lighted at high mass. It represents Christ risen.

(*a.*) The pure white wax, of which it consists, signifies the glorified body of Christ.

(*b.*) The five holes, with the grains of incense therein, typify the five holy wounds which Jesus retained after his Resurrection.

(*c.*) The light reminds us of his Divinity and his words: "I am the light of the world."

(*d.*) It is taken away on Ascension Thursday, to indicate that Christ by his Ascension into heaven has withdrawn his visible presence from us.

PERORATION.

The time and the peculiarities of the celebration of Easter remind us of the mystery of the glorious Resurrection of our Lord. Christ, our head, is risen from the dead. Let us also rise from the grave of sin to the life of grace. Christ dies no more, but lives for ever. Let us no more die the death of sin, but let us preserve with the greatest solicitude the life of grace to our last breath. Christ is crowned with honor and glory; let us also fight the good fight, that as conquerors we may be crowned. Amen.

EASTER SUNDAY.

5. SYMBOLICAL SKETCH.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST AN EMBLEM OF OUR SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION.

You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified; he is risen, he is not here.—Mark. 16: 6.

"Christ is truly risen, Alleluia." This is the song of joy and exultation which the Church in the joy of her heart intones on this festival day, and during Paschal time repeats again and again. Death and the grave could not retain their prey; Jesus Christ, as he had so frequently foretold, rose from the dead on the third day. But as Christ rose from the dead to-day corporally, so we should rise spiritually, according to the words of the Apostle: "As Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life."—*Rom.* 6: 4. The Resurrection of Christ will profit us nothing if we remain in the state of sin. But the question is: How can we be convinced that our spiritual resurrection is real? We can be convinced of this if it has the marks of the Resurrection of Christ, i. e.,

I. If the stone is rolled back;
II. If we leave the grave, and
III. If we no more return to it.

PART I.

1. The sepulchre in which Christ was laid, was secured by a massive stone, on which the Jews fixed the seal of public authority. It could not be moved from the entrance without great labor. This stone was the cause of a great deal of anxiety to the women who went out early in the morning to anoint Jesus, and they said one to another: *Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre?* But having come to the grave, they saw the stone rolled back. St. Matthew tells us so in these words: "There was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven: and coming, rolled back the stone, and sat upon it" (28: 2). I must remark here that Christ had already risen before the stone was rolled back and the grave was opened; the stone rolled back was only a sign that he was truly risen from the dead.

2. Our spiritual resurrection must have this sign; the stone that is lying on our conscience must be removed. Every sinner, whatever sins he may have committed, has a stone, a heavy weight, on his conscience. There are sinners who do not confess sincerely, who, from fear or shame, conceal sins in confession, or who do not confess a circumstance that should necessarily be mentioned, or who confess candidly but without true supernatural contrition, or a firm purpose of amendment, and of avoiding sin and the proximate occasion of it, of restoring ill-gotten goods, of repairing damages, of retracting slander and calumny, and of being reconciled with their enemies. These are heavy stones, which perhaps lie a long time on the hearts of many. Have you by a good confession at this holy time rolled back these stones from your conscience? Have you overcome yourselves and confessed all your sins with the necessary circumstances? Have you repeated and made valid the confessions which were invalid for the want of contrition and a firm purpose of amendment? Have you restored your neighbors' property and repaired the damage done him? Are you reconciled with all your enemies? Are you really resolved to avoid sin and the proximate occasion thereof? If you can answer these questions in the affirmative, things stand well with you, the stone is rolled back, and I can here congratulate you on your spiritual resurrection. But if you must answer them negatively, you are really to be pitied: the stone is still on your conscience, and you are lying in the grave of sin. Whoever has a heavy stone on his conscience let him roll it back, that this Easter may not be to him a time of perdition, but of salvation.

Part II.

1. Christ proved his Resurrection also *by leaving the sepulchre and not returning to it.* The women approaching the sepulchre, saw the stone rolled back; they went to anoint his body, but he was not there; they saw an angel, who said to them: *You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified; he is risen, he is not here.* The angel told the women emphatically that Christ was no longer in the sepulchre, in order to convince them of his Resurrection.

2. We must bring the same proof of our spiritual resurrection; *we must come out of the grave of sin.* This must be done—

(*a.*) *Interiorly*, by a complete and thorough transformation and amendment of the heart. The whole disposition of the sinner is perverse; he takes pleasure in what is evil, virtue is odious or at least indifferent to him. He must totally change his mind, he must hate and detest sin from the bottom of his heart, and love virtue and long for it. God requires this change, for he says: "Be converted to me with all your heart, in fasting, and in weeping, and in mourning. And rend your hearts, and not your garments."—*Joel* 2: 12, 13. The Jews used to rend their garments to express their sorrow and mourning, but, as many rent their garments without any interior sorrow and detestation of sin, God exhorted them not to rend their garments, but their hearts; that is, they should not only exteriorly but also interiorly repent of their sins and do penance, because the former without the latter would be unprofitable. This interior transformation and amendment of heart we find in all true penitents. A certain young man, who for some time had kept up a criminal intercourse with a young woman and had grievously offended God, made a good confession at Easter, and in order to eradicate his passion undertook a long journey. Returning after a while, he twice met the woman, but he passed her by without looking at her. The third time she stopped him, saying: "What is the matter with you; do you not know me any longer? I am so and so." He answered: "You may be so and so, but I am not now the person who knew so and so."

All who have risen spiritually must be so disposed; they must be totally changed from what they were formerly. Sin must no longer be in their heart, as a corpse in the grave. Is this the case with us? Can every one of us say, I hate and detest sin above all things? I am resolved to amend my life and to offend God no more. Ah, how many may there be among us who must acknowledge the contrary. They confess because

it is Easter and because "they fear the people" (*Luke* 20: 19); to keep up their reputation as good Christians; but they do not earnestly intend to amend their life; they lack the principal requirements for a good confession, contrition and resolution; they have after confession, as before it, a perverse disposition of mind, their heart is attached to sin, and they have not the slightest intention of beginning a new life. The poor creatures still lie in the grave of sin, and their last state is worse than the first, for they have received the holy Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist unworthily, and have added the guilt of sacrilege to the catalogue of their crimes.

(*b.*) *Exteriorly.* He that is transformed and renewed interiorly manifests it also exteriorly; he carefully avoids everything that is evil, and does what is good with fervor and zeal. The gracious look that Jesus cast on Peter having brought him to the knowledge of his sins and to repentance, he returns no more to the occasion, but goes out and weeps bitterly, to indicate that his heart is bruised; he denies his Lord and Master no more, but confesses him before his greatest enemies, the high-priests, Scribes and Pharisees, and not only now and then, but again and again, as long as he lives, and in consequence of his confession cheerfully suffers imprisonment and death. St. Paul, who entertained a most bitter hatred against the Christians and persecuted them most violently, displayed after his conversion a most admirable zeal; he made long and fatiguing journeys by land and water for the propagation of the faith, and in all things exhibited himself as a minister of God "in much patience, in tribulation, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in prisons, in seditions, in labors, in watchings, in fastings, etc." (*II. Cor.* 6: 4, 5), and nothing, "neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, was able to separate him from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus."—*Rom.* 8: 38, 39.

In the same way all true penitents will manifest exteriorly their spiritual resurrection by an amendment of life. They will no longer keep any sinful company; they will not curse, blaspheme, use immodest language or give themselves up to drunkenness and gambling; in a word, they will most carefully avoid the sins to which they have been previously addicted and the proximate occasions thereof, and fulfil with commendable zeal the duties of their religion and state of life, which they formerly neglected or fulfilled only very imperfectly. They will be diligent in attendance at church on Sundays and holidays, going frequently to confession and communion, loving to read spiritual books and holding pious conversation; they will dress modestly,

live temperately and soberly, in peace with all members of their household, obeying their superiors; and if they are fathers or mothers they will guide their children to virtue by meekness and a good example.

Thus true penitents show that they have left the grave of sin. But what shall we say of those who, after their Easter confession and communion, live as godlessly and wickedly as before, and in whom not the slightest amendment is noticeable? What else, indeed, than that they are not spiritually risen?

PART III.

Our Lord raised three dead persons to life: *The youth of Naim, the daughter of Jairus*, and *Lazarus of Bethania*. All three after returning to life were strong and healthy, and lived many years; but after all they died again and went down into the grave. Their resurrection from the dead was not lasting. It is not so with the resurrection of Christ; having left the sepulchre he returns there no more; he will die no more for ever. "Knowing that Christ rising again from the dead, dieth now no more; death shall no more have dominion over him."—*Rom.* 6: 9.

Like Christ, so we after our spiritual resurrection must never again return to the grave, never again die the death of sin, but always lead a holy life of grace. What would it have profited St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Magdalen, and others, if they had amended their lives for a time and then relapsed into their former sins? "If the just man turn himself away from his justice, and do iniquity . . . all his justices which he hath done shall not be remembered; . . . and in his sins, which he hath committed, in them he shall die."—*Ezech.* 18: 24. Christ himself says: "No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."—*Luke* 9: 62. This applies to all those who, after having received the sacraments at Easter, amend their lives for a little while, and then relapse; they forfeit the grace of God and render themselves liable to eternal damnation.

Oh, how many are there who, after Easter is passed, will return to the old grave of sin! In the last days of Holy Week a candlestick with thirteen candles is placed in the church; all these candles are alight at the beginning of the office, but during its progress one after the other is extinguished, till there is but one burning, and this is taken from the altar and hidden behind it. As with these candles, so it is with many Catholics at Easter. They go to confession and communion, the light of grace burns in their hearts; but Easter being over, one after the other allows

the light of the love and grace of God to be extinguished in his heart, or, not to speak figuratively, they return to their old worldly and sinful life. It has been so every Easter, and there is very much reason to fear that I will be so again this year. But how deplorable the condition of such relapsing sinners! They are guilty of the greatest ingratitude towards God, for after he has shown them mercy and forgiven their sins, they offend him again; they cast away the jewel which is worth more than the whole world, sanctifying grace, and they compel God, as it were, to withdraw his hand from them and expose them to the danger of dying in sin, and being buried in hell. Oh, that they would take to heart the words of St. Peter: "For if, flying from the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they be again entangled in them and overcome, their latter state is become unto them worse than the former. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of justice, than after they have known it, to turn back from that holy commandment which was delivered to them."—*II. Peter* 2 : 20, 21.

PERORATION.

These are the signs which, according to the example of the corporal resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, your spiritual resurrection must have. You *must roll back the stone from the grave,* that is, you must cleanse your conscience from all sins by a humble and sincere confession; you *must come forth from the grave,* interiorly and exteriorly, by the renovation and amelioration of your mind and life; *you must never more return to the grave,* but with constancy and perseverance lead a life of penance, guarding carefully against every relapse. Well for you will it be if of every one of you it can be said what the angel said to-day of Christ: *"He is risen!"* And if you, like the risen Lord, die no more, but preserve the life of grace to the end, a glorious resurrection on the last day and a feast of joy in heaven will be your reward. Amen.

EASTER SUNDAY.

6. DOGMATIC-MORAL SKETCH.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST: ITS IMPORT FOR OUR FAITH AND LIFE.

You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified; he is risen.—*Mark* 16: 6.

The feast of Easter is undoubtedly the greatest and most joyful of all the feasts of the Ecclesiastical Year, for it represents to us the accomplishment of our Redemption. Christ came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (*Luke* 19: 10), and whatever he did in his earthly life had no other end than to atone for our sins and to redeem us. But according to the decree of divine Providence the work of our Redemption could be effected only by the death of Christ on the cross. It was only on the cross that Christ could cry out to the world: "It is consummated." To-day, rising from the grave, adorned with the marks of his sacred wounds, he appears in the true sense of the word as the Saviour, the Redeemer of the world. Sin is blotted out, the kingdom of Satan destroyed, the prince of the world cast out, the power of hell broken, and redeemed man once more with filial confidence can look up to heaven and say, "Abba, Father." Hence the joy which reigns supreme to-day throughout the whole Christian world; hence the song of joy and exultation of the Church: "Alleluia, this is the day which the Lord hath made; let us exult and rejoice in it."

But Easter is not only a time of joy and exultation for every Christian heart; it also contains a mystery which is of the greatest importance for our faith and life; for the Resurrection of Christ is, as we shall consider to-day—

I. The foundation of our faith;
II. The most powerful incentive to a pious life.

PART I.

1. *The Resurrection of Christ is the foundation of our faith.*

No one can doubt the truth and divinity of our faith, if Christ is risen again.

(*a.*) The prophets foretold that the Messias would rise again from the dead. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (that is, in the grave), nor wilt thou give thy holy one to see corruption."—*Ps.* 15: 10. There can be no doubt that this prophecy refers to Christ, because St. Peter emphatically applies it to him.—*Acts* 2: 27. The prophets Isaias (11: 10) and Osee (6: 3) also speak of the Resurrection of Christ. The former says that the Gentiles shall beseech him, and his sepulchre shall be glorious (on account of his glorious Resurrection); the latter, that God will receive him and the third day raise him up. Now, if Christ is risen, the predictions of the prophets are fulfilled, and he must truly be the promised Messias.

(*b.*) Christ frequently and emphatically foretold that he would die, but would rise again on the third day. "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man. For he shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon, and after they have scourged him, they will put him to death, and *the third day he shall rise again.*"—*Luke* 18: 31-33. "As Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights, so shall *the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights.*"—*Matt.* 12: 40. "Destroy this temple, and *in three days I will raise it up.*"—*John* 2: 19. That the Jews, especially the Scribes and Pharisees, understood these prophecies of Christ very well, is evident from the fact that after his death they applied to Pilate for a guard to watch the sepulchre: "Sir, we have remembered that that seducer said, while he was yet alive: After three days I will rise again. Command, therefore, the sepulchre to be guarded until the third day lest perhaps his disciples come, and steal him away, and say to the people, he is risen from the dead; and the last error shall be worse than the first."—*Matt.* 27: 63, 64. If Christ had not risen from the dead on the third day, we could not believe him to be the Son of God and Redeemer of the world, because his prophecy would not have been fulfilled.

(*c.*) It is true, we have still other evidences of his dignity as the Messias and of his divinity besides his Resurrection. We have, for instance, the evidence of the *holiness of his life*, which even his enemies acknowledged, for upon his question: "Which of you shall convince me of sin?" (*John* 8: 46) they kept silence. Judas confessed: "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood" (*Matt.* 27: 4), and Pilate declared before the multitude of people: "I am innocent of the blood of this just man; look you to it."—*Matt.* 27: 24. But important as is this evidence of the holiness of

Christ, it would not of itself be conclusive nor sufficient to prove his Divinity beyond all doubt, for as there are wolves in sheep's clothing, we might be tempted to think that the holiness of Christ was only an outward semblance and hypocrisy.

Our Lord also proved the authenticity of his divine mission by miracles, for he healed all kinds of sickness and raised up the dead; but many objections might be raised against these miracles: one might say that they were only delusions and apparent miracles, which he did in compact with and by the power of the devil. He said himself that false Christs and false prophets would arise, and do great signs and wonders, inasmuch as to deceive, if it were possible, even the elect.—*Matt.* 24: 24.

If Christ had not risen from the dead, neither his sanctity nor his miracles could be a conclusive evidence of the Divinity of his person and doctrine. But his Resurrection banishes every doubt. As he is risen from the dead, God his Father has given testimony to him that he is his only-begotten Son; and as he raised himself from the dead by his own power, he immediately proved that he is true God; for this could be done by God alone. The Resurrection of Christ, therefore, is the foundation of our faith. He who believes that Christ has risen from the dead has no reason to yield to doubt on any article of his faith. Hence it was to the Resurrection of Christ that the Apostles chiefly appealed, to convince the Jews and Gentiles of his divinity and the truth of his gospel; and St. Paul gives utterance to this remarkable expression: "If Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain."—*I. Cor.* 15: 14.

2. But is it certain that Christ rose from the dead? Yes; and the witnesses are—

(*a.*) *His enemies*—namely, the soldiers who guarded the sepulchre, and the High Council of the Jews. The earth quakes, an angel in dazzling attire descends from heaven and removes with ease the ponderous obstruction, opening the grave for the inspection of our Lord's anxious disciples; consternation seizes the guards and they become as dead men; they have scarcely recovered from their stupor when they take to flight, hasten to the Sanhedrim, and exclaim: "Christ is risen." It is probable that the members of the High Council contradicted their testimony and reproached them with harsh words, but as the soldiers continued their assertion, they were placed in a very awkward predicament, and could find no way to get out of it except by bribing the soldiers with a large sum of money, so that they night spread the lie that his disciples came when they were asleep, and stole his body.

(*b.*) *The Apostles.* It was hard for them to believe the Resurrection of their Master. When the women told them that Christ was risen, they did not believe them. He was obliged to appear to them, to discourse with them, to show them the marks of his wounds, and allow himself to be touched by them, to sit at the table and eat with them, before they laid aside their doubts and believed in his Resurrection. Who could reject their testimony, especially since it did not bring them the least advantage, but only hatred, persecution, prison, and death? Who could in the least doubt their testimony, for they confirmed it with great miracles and therefore God himself vouched for the truth of their words?

(*c.*) *The multitude of people to whom the risen Christ appeared.* He appeared not only to the women, to Peter, and the rest of the Apostles, and to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, but, as St. Paul (*I. Cor.* 15: 6) says, to five hundred disciples at once. Now, if so great a multitude of men saw the risen Saviour, and, as St. Matthew says (28: 27), adored him, and unanimously testified to his Resurrection, who can contradict such a testimony?

(*d.*) *The circumstance, finally, that the Resurrection of Christ was universally known, especially in all Jerusalem.* When St. Peter, fifty days afterwards, on the feast of Pentecost, preached publicly of the Resurrection of Christ, there was not one that contradicted him; even the High Council, the Scribes and the Pharisees, dared not confront him and the other Apostles, and charge them with an untruth. All they afterwards did was to forbid them to preach in the name of Jesus, to scourge them and cast them into prison.

The Resurrection of Christ is therefore a fact which can not be reasonably controverted, and consequently the foundation of our holy faith. But it is also the most powerful incentive to a pious life.

PART II.

1. *The Resurrection of Christ is a most powerful incentive to a pious life*, encouraging us to do the will of God in every situation of life.

"My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, that I may perfect his work."—*John* 4: 34. Our Saviour could say this in truth, for his whole life upon earth was one continual, uninter-

rupted fulfilment of the will of his heavenly Father. For thirty years he led a hidden life, because his Father willed it; he began his public life, went about, taught, worked miracles, and finally died on the cross in unspeakable tortures and sufferings, because it was the will of his Father. Thus the human will of Christ was entirely subject to the will of God; he did everything that God willed, and in the manner he willed. How gloriously do we see him rewarded for the faithful performance of the divine will! To-day, coming forth from the grave with a glorified body, "God also hath exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above all names; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father."—*Phil.* 2: 9-11. What a glorious end! What a great reward!

If we consider our risen Redeemer in his glory, should we not be encouraged to do the will of God in all circumstances? What does not man do to procure for himself a pleasant earthly life? What tribulations, what perils and humiliations does he not undergo, not only for days and weeks, but for years? And we can be dilatory in doing the will of God, knowing, as we do, that if we work and suffer with Christ we shall be glorified with him!

2. *It encourages us to maintain a constant warfare against the enemies of our salvation.*

(*a.*) The life of Christ was a continual combat with Satan, the prince of the world. He had come to crush the serpent's head, to destroy the kingdom of Satan, to recover for us the inheritance, which we had lost by sin, and to redeem us from the slavery of centuries; but Satan resisted with all his might; hence a continual contest and struggle. In the desert, where he tempted our Lord three times and was overcome as often, he had found out that he alone could not prevail against him; then he looked for confederates to help him to frustrate Christ's work of redemption. And he found willing tools in the Scribes and Pharisees and the Jews in general. What did not Christ endure from them, how often did they lay snares to catch him in his speech; how they calumniated, blasphemed, and insulted him, in order to destroy all confidence in him and render him odious to the people! They did not shrink even from brute force, for more than once they were about to lay hands on him, and to take his life. Finally the devil entered into Judas, who betrayed his Lord and Master, and delivered him into the hands of his enemies. Jesus died on the cross. Hell is apparently successful, and its blind

instruments exult in their triumph, thinking that they have conquered and destroyed the name of Jesus for ever. But the intoxication of victory is of short duration. Easter Sunday announces a victory such as heaven and earth never before witnessed. Christ rises from the dead, glorious and immortal; the nations, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, adore him; Judaism and Paganism fall, and the kingdom of Christ is spread over all the earth.

(*b.*) Warfare is our lot upon earth. "The life of man upon earth is a warfare, and his days are like the days of a hireling."—*Job* 7: 1. We carry about us a wicked enemy, our concupiscence, which prevents us reposing in God, and prepares violent temptations for us. We must fight against the devil, who, full of hatred and envy, pursues and everywhere lays snares, seeking our ruin. We live in a world which endeavors to seduce us by its false maxims, scandals, and bad examples. Especially in our days Infidels and Freethinkers do their utmost to tear religion and the fear of God out of our hearts. Who can listen to their language, or read their papers and books, without being horrified at their hatred of Christianity? Who would not be discouraged at the aspect of the persecutions which the Catholic Church and her children are obliged to endure! But let us not be of little faith; Christ, who crushed the head of the serpent, forsakes us not; his victory is our victory, for he has merited for us the grace to overcome every enemy. Let us gather round the banner of the cross, and no power, either of man or of the devil, can harm us. And what a triumph if we are found to be brave warriors we shall enter with him into his glory and receive a great reward, as he says himself: "To him that overcometh, I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of my God."—*Apoc.* 2: 7.

3. *It encourages us earnestly to aspire to perfection.*

The Resurrection of Christ is the pledge and type of our future resurrection. Christ is our head, we his members; what has been done with the head must also be done with the members. As certain as Christ is risen, so certain is it that we shall rise again. "If Christ be preached that he arose again from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen again."—*I. Cor.* 15: 12, 13. Christ is also the *type of our resurrection.* He "will reform the body of our lowness, made like to the body of his glory."—*Phil.* 3: 21. The bodies of the just therefore after their resurrection, will resemble the body of the risen Christ; they will be finally

transformed and glorified; they will become impassible, immortal, spiritual, and united with the soul will enjoy unspeakable felicity in heaven.

PERORATION.

"Be mindful that the Lord Jesus Christ is risen again from the dead."—*II. Tim.* 2: 8. This truth of our holy religion is the foundation of our faith and the strongest incentive to a holy life. If you have temptations against faith interiorly or exteriorly, say: "What I believe is the doctrine of Christ; he is risen from the dead, he is the Son of God, the infallible truth; I therefore stand firm in my faith and nothing in the world shall ever make me waver in it." If it seems hard sometimes to lead a holy life, and if you must endure hard trials, do not falter, look up to Christ; having finished his course, he triumphs over sin, death, and hell, now and for evermore. His infinitely blessed lot will be ours; therefore follow him courageously, and trusting in his grace devote yourselves to his service to your last breath; then the blessed Easter morning will also dawn for you in heaven where, with the angels and saints, you will sing an everlasting Alleluia. Amen.

EASTER SUNDAY.

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7. MORAL SKETCH.

THE EASTER JOY AND SORROW OF THE CHURCH.

You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified; he is risen.—*Mark* 16: 6.

Our holy mother the Church during the past season of Lent, and especially during Holy Week, has passed through a sad ordeal. On Good Friday morning we beheld her clad as a widow in the black habiliments of grief, with no one to comfort her, as with disheveled locks she stood sinking, as it were, beneath the weight of her profound sorrow, mourning the loss of her divine Spouse. The absence of instrumental music at the celebration of

the holy sacrifice of the mass, her bare altars and covered crucifixes, her melancholy office of *Tenebræ*, the silence of the bells for the past three days—all breathed mournfulness and sadness on account of the passion and death of Christ, our Lord and Redeemer. From her maternal breast proceeded that plaintive cry: "Oh, all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow."—*Lam.* 1: 12. But to-day her mother's sorrow is changed into a mother's joy; for Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, lives, and dies no more: therefore she sings: "The Lord is risen. Alleluia."

Still another joy is prepared for the Church at Easter. Many of her children will rise from the grave of sin to the life of grace, so that she can say of them: "This my son (this my daughter), was dead. and is come to life again."—*Luke* 15: 24. But as there is no perfect and unalloyed joy here below, so the joy of the Church is not perfect; it is mingled with sorrow, and this sorrow is caused by those of her children who do not rise spiritually at Easter, or who, after having risen, fall back into the grave of sin. As we are all of the number of those who cause the Church either joy or sorrow, it will be profitable to meditate to-day—

I. On the Easter joy of the Church;
II. On the Easter sorrow of the Church.

PART I.

The Easter joy of the Church is caused—

I. By the corporal Resurrection of her divine Founder; she rejoices—

1. *On account of the intense love which she bears towards him.* No bride loves her bridegroom, no mother her child, as the Church loves her Spouse and Redeemer. She loves him *for his own sake*, because as God and man he is infinitely loveable; she loves him out of gratitude for all the graces and benefits which flow to her from his hands, and which are boundless. What has he not done for her! what has he not suffered for her! what power has he not given her! how many and what precious means of grace has he not deposited in her hands! How sublime in her destiny, to triumph for ever in heaven! If we love a person much, we rejoice at his good fortune and prosperity, and our joy is the greater if he has been struggling in great misery and now suddenly attains to honor and riches. Why should the Church not

rejoice at Easter, when after such humiliation and contumely, after long sufferings and an ignominious and painful death, she sees him come forth gloriously from the grave and crowned with honor and glory?

2. *She rejoices on account of the graces which she owes to the Resurrection of Christ.* These graces are—

(*a.*) *Her introduction into the world.* Suppose Christ had not risen from the dead, what would have become of the Church? She would have, so to say, perished in her cradle, for no one would have believed in the Divinity of her Founder. His Apostles and disciples, themselves as yet weak in faith, would not have even dared to preach the gospel and the Divinity of Christ; and if they had done so, no one would have believed them; they would have been rejected as impostors and cheats by both Jew and Gentile. Only the fact that Jesus is risen from the dead induced men to believe them, and enabled the Church to enter the world and spread herself all over the earth.

(*b.*) *Her perpetuity to the end of the world.* Our Lord's promise that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against her," obtained full certainty only by his Resurrection. Christ having proved his Divinity by his Resurrection, the Church can now console herself in all difficulties and persecutions in these words: "My enemies may exert all their power and malice for my destruction; they can not destroy me, for Jesus has promised me protection from all my enemies and perpetuity to the end of the world, and his word deserves the fullest credit, because by his Resurrection he has stamped the seal of Divinity on his person and doctrine." Let us rejoice with her in these days, when we see her circumvented and persecuted on every side, and let us console ourselves with the thought that her enemies can oppress, but not suppress and destroy her, and that sooner or later the day of triumph will dawn for her.

(*c.*) *The truth and divinity of her faith and doctrine.* The faith which she teaches she has from Christ, her Founder, who is the Son of God. She also has the certainty that she will keep this divine doctrine pure and undefiled to the end of time, because Christ promised her his assistance and that of the Holy Ghost for all ages. She can, therefore, say: "As it is impossible that Christ, the Son of God, and the Holy Ghost, can teach an untruth, so is it impossible that I can teach falsehood and lead men into error, because I am under the perpetual guidance of Christ and the Holy Ghost. The Church, therefore, rejoices that, as

the infallible teacher of truth, she is able to instruct the nations for all time in the true faith, and to conduct them to eternal life. Let us rejoice at the inestimable grace of being children of the Catholic Church, and of having, as such, the only true and saving faith.

(*d.*) *Her power for the salvation of men.* Christ made the Church his representative upon earth, and gave her the power to announce his doctrine, to offer his holy sacrifice, to administer his holy sacraments; in a word, to do everything that is required for the purification and sanctification of man. Whatever she binds upon earth, is bound also in heaven; and whatever she looses upon earth, is loosed also in heaven.—*Matt.* 18: 18. The great of this world have power only over the bodies of men and over time; the Church has power over their souls and over eternity. There is no sin so great that she has not the power to forgive; she closes hell, and opens heaven. Why should the Church not rejoice at the power entrusted to her by Christ? And why should we not deem ourselves happy in belonging to a Church that possesses in abundance the necessary means of salvation?

II. By the spiritual resurrection of her children. She has reason to rejoice—

1. *On account of the deplorable condition from which her children are rescued by the spiritual resurrection.* All those who are not yet spiritually risen, that is, who have a grievous sin on their conscience, are extremely wretched, for—

(*a.*) *They are under the displeasure of God.* God can not possibly be pleased with them, nor love them, because they have grievously offended him, for as often as they sinned, they insulted him, despised him, rebelled against him; and because they continue this offense against him as long as they continue in sin. What an evil is the wrath of God! Two courtiers once misbehaved in church during divine worship. It came to the ears of the king, who called them, and said to them: "Never let me see you again." They were so terrified that one was taken ill and died and the other became insane. If the displeasure of an earthly king effected this, what will be effected by the wrath of God, who is the King of heaven and earth? Need we wonder that on the day of judgment the reprobate, on beholding the wrathful countenance of the Judge, full of terror, will cry out to the mountains and hills to cover them and hide them from his face?

(*b.*) *They can do nothing meritorious.* Let them do as much good as they may, practice the most heroic virtues, they can not ex-

pect the least reward for it hereafter; they are destitute of supernatural life, which is sanctifying grace; they resemble a dead man, who can not move. The words of the Apostle apply to them: "If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."—*I. Cor.* 13: 3. So long as they live in sin, all their good works, fasting, prayer, alms-deeds, all their pains and labors, all their sufferings and tribulations are without value and lost for eternity.

(*c.*) *They are in great danger of being lost for ever, especially if they live for a long time in sin without repentance.* Death may overtake them in the midst of their sinful career, as happens every day. What then? They will share the lot of the people at the deluge, of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrha, of Ophni and Phinees. Unless they cease to offend him, God will turn away and withdraw his grace from them; the result will be that they will never be converted, because they would need, not ordinary, but extraordinary graces for their conversion. The longer they continue in sin, the more they fall into blindness and obstinacy; hence their conversion, unless God gives them extraordinary graces, is rendered very difficult, if not absolutely impossible.

Now, when the Church sees so many of her children, who heretofore have lived in sin, put an end to this deplorable condition by a spiritual resurrection from the grave of sin, shall she not rejoice and be glad, she, the mother who loves even the greatest sinner most affectionately, wishing nothing more ardently than that he be converted, and live? The widow of Naim, whose only son Christ raised up, certainly had no greater joy than the Church has over the spiritual resurrection of her children.

2. *On account of the inestimable graces which are imparted to her children by spiritual resurrection.*

(*a.*) *They obtain the forgiveness of their sins and are delivered from the everlasting punishments due to them.* Sin, as faith teaches us, is the greatest, nay, the only evil, because all other evils spring from it, and because it makes man miserable for time and eternity. The fire of hell, in which the reprobate will burn for ever, was kindled by sin, for if the angels had not sinned there would be no hell, and if sin had not entered into the world no one would go to hell. And what a terrible punishment is hell! To be cast away for ever, to be tortured for ever without the least cessation or mitigation! Now all those sinners who truly

and permanently become converted at Easter escape this terrible state.

(*b.*) *They recover all the merits that had been lost by sin, and the capacity of acquiring fresh merit for heaven.* The merits which one has acquired in the state of grace, but which are forfeited through a grievous sin, are revived as soon as by a true conversion one is restored to a state of grace; moreover, the good which one does in the state of grace, and with a pure intention, becomes meritorious for heaven.

(*c.*) *They again become children of God and heirs of heaven.* To be a child of God, to be able to say, God loves me—loves me more than ever a father loved his child—is not this the greatest grace that can be imparted to us? If a king were to adopt the child of a poor beggar, would it not be a singular case? would not others envy such a child? But what is an earthly king compared with God? Not as much as a drop of water compared with the ocean. What a grace, then, to be a child of God! And what shall I say of heaven, to the heirship of which the sinner is restored as soon as he rises from the grave of sin? Is not heaven, with its eternal, unspeakable joys, worth all?

Now you see that the Easter joy of the Church over the spiritual resurrection of her children is natural. Why should not this affectionate mother, whose heart is all love, rejoice and be glad when she sees that in this acceptable time many of her children leave the broad way that leads to destruction, and enter upon the narrow road that leads to life? Why should she not exult over the inestimable happiness of which they become sharers by their conversion? Oh, that all who are lying in the grave of sin would rise to the life of grace in order that their mother the Church may have a great Easter joy.

PART II.

The Church has at Easter not *only joy*, but *also sorrow. What causes the sorrow of the Church?*

1. *Some of her children neglect to comply with their Easter duty, i.e., to go to confession and communion.* It is a strict law of the Church to confess our sins at least once a year, and at Easter to receive holy communion. To receive communion worthily, we must be free at least from every mortal sin: that we may receive it worthily it is a universal custom to go, not only to communion,

but also to confession. He who neglects the reception of the holy sacraments at Easter, commits a mortal sin, and if he perseveres in his disobedience, may be deprived of Christian burial. Catholics who do not go to confession and communion even at Easter, give themselves a poor character; they give us to understand that they have lost all religious sentiment, and perhaps even the faith itself, for, indeed, it shows great degeneracy and moral corruption not to go to one's Easter duty. Such wicked people generally come to an unholy and unhappy end. The Church fears this, and hence her sorrow when she sees that some of her children neglect at Easter to receive the sacraments. She is greatly grieved at such stubborn children, and breaks forth with the complaint: "I have brought up children and exalted them, but they have despised me."—*Is.* 1 : 2.

2. *Many of her children receive the sacraments unworthily.* The number of those who neglect their Easter duty is smaller than the number of those who receive the sacraments unworthily. The great majority go to confession, but how do they confess? Without contrition and a purpose of amendment; they do not detest the evil which they have done, they do not think of giving up their sinful life, they are not resolved to avoid bad company, cursing, swearing, blaspheming, drunkenness and gambling, unchaste conversation and songs; to restore unjust goods, to give up enmity, not to be unjust in their dealings with others. They content themselves with a superficial examination of conscience, so that they are not able to make a complete confession, they do not rectify their former invalid confessions, they knowingly conceal mortal sins, and other things which necessarily ought to be confessed, and so it comes to pass that they confess unworthily. And since they go to communion afterwards they burden their conscience with a double sacrilege. How deplorable is the condition of such persons! They are worse off after the reception of the sacraments than they were before, because they are not only defiled with their old sins, but have added a double sacrilege to the catalogue of their crimes. Their condition can not be too much deplored, for there is no greater crime than a sacrilege, especially the sacrilege of an unworthy communion; for it is not only the profanation of a sacred thing, but of a thing most sacred. For if the sinner, having made an unworthy confession, allows the priest to give him absolution, it is the abuse of the sacred blood of Jesus, which, falling upon a criminal as it then does, is more profaned, abused, and contemned, than when the Jews shed it upon the earth and trampled it under their feet. The Sacrament of Penance is a sentence of absolution, but he that receives it unworthily for whatever reason changes the sentence of absolution into a sentence of condemnation. He who

goes to communion after such a confession receives unworthily, and he that receives unworthily becomes guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, and commits the sin which the Jews committed when they crucified Jesus, eating and drinking judgment to himself, that is, eternal damnation.—*I. Cor.* 11: 27-30. And as at Easter many do not confess from a free impulse and in the spirit of penance, but more from compulsion, from human respect, it can not be doubted that many receive the sacraments unworthily. Has the Church, then, no reason to be sorrowful? Why should she not feel grieved when she sees that so many of her children, whom she would save, do not permit themselves to be saved, and that the means which should bring them grace and salvation cause their perdition?

3. *The majority of her children relapse.* When the Israelites had come to the river Jordan and were about to enter the land of Chanaan, "the waters that came down from above stood in one place, and swelling up like a mountain, were seen afar off from the city, but those that were beneath ran down into the sea of the wilderness, which now is called the Dead Sea." And all the people passed over through the channel that was dried up, as they had done before in the Red Sea, and when they had passed over, the waters returned into the channel, and ran as they were wont before.—*Jos.* 3: 16, 17; 4: 18-24. The same can be said of many Catholics. At Easter, they receive the sacraments and avoid sin, but Easter is scarcely over when the waters of sin run as before: they drink, gamble, curse, swear, blaspheme, are unchaste, just as before. Tell me, is it not so? Are there not many here present who must acknowledge that soon after their Easter confession and communion they, as a rule, return to their old life of sin? What kind of a conversion is that which lasts only a few days or weeks? Such relapsing Catholics can expect no other end than that of King Saul and Balaam, who perished on account of their relapsing into their former vices.

When our holy mother the Church, who is so solicitous for our welfare, sees that so many of her children after Easter commit the old sins again, and perhaps worse ones, should she not be grieved? Should she not mourn and lament, when she has only too much reason to fear the worst for the salvation of these relapsing sinners?

PERORATION.

Oh, that there may be none among us who will cause our mother the Church this sadness and sorrow. Oh, that we all may

celebrate a spiritual resurrection, which is a true image of the corporeal Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! Let us, therefore, feast, according to the admonition of the Apostle, *not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.* Let us cleanse and sanctify our hearts by a worthy reception of the sacraments, and preserve with the greatest care the treasure of sanctifying grace. Let us offer ourselves without reserve to God, and serve him with unwavering fidelity all the days of our lives, that we may become worthy to celebrate with our holy mother the Church an everlasting Easter in heaven. Amen.



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